



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

COMMITTEE MEETING

DATES:

GDRC: 30/09/2020

EXCO: TBC

HRM COM: TBC

COUNCIL: TBC

GRADING SUBMISSION

SUBMITTED BY: Heritage Protection Unit

DATE: 23 September 2020

FILE REF / SAHRIS CASE ID: 6039

SAHRIS SITE TYPE: Living Heritage / Sacred Site

Significance Category (THEMES): Social: Social, Cultural, Spiritual, Sense of Place

ENQUIRIES: Heidi Weldon

ITEM: Proposed Nomination of Site for Grade 1 Status: Madimatle, including the Madimatle (Gatkop) Cave and Meletse Mountain, Thabazimbi, Limpopo Province

A1. BACKGROUND

- A1.1. Mountains and caves have always been a part of African Spiritual belief systems and revered as sacred places, places of prayer, worship and communication with the spiritual world (Motshekga & Mosala 2014). In Batswana cosmology, caves and mountains, also play very important and special role as the places of Genesis, such as the Lōwe Cave in Botswana (van Vuuren 2014a).
- A1.2. Madimatle, meaning *Good/Pure/Beautiful Blood*, situated in Thabazimbi, Limpopo, is a one such highly revered sacred place to the Ba Kgatla people, as a place of their birth and regeneration. It holds spiritual ancestral significance linked the African Traditional and Christian religious practices. People from across southern Africa travel to Madimatle to learn, worship, perform rituals, receive guidance and healing.
- A1.3. Madimatle is considered as a landscape by those who make use of the site. In this landscape are natural features such as caves, mountains, springs and ridges. All these features form a unit and cannot be disentangled. Of importance, is the Madimatle Cave and Meletse Mountain. It is believed that the cave allows spiritual access to the Meletse Mountain (van Vuuren 2014, 2019; van Vollenhoven 2018; Makgae et al 2020; Coplan and Moopelo 2020)

- A.1.4. In 2010/2011 Aquila Steel South Africa (Pty) Ltd (represented by Webber Wentzel Attorneys) purchased the properties on which the sites occur, and explored the potential of mining the iron ore on the Meletse Mount situated on the remainder of the Farm Donkerpoort 448 KQ. After prospecting on the mountain, Aquila proposed the establishment of open cast iron ore extraction – the Meletse Iron Ore Project. A mining license was subsequently applied for, which SAHRA issued an interim comment. The local community, the Traditional Healers Organisation and Kara Institute appealed against the mining.
- A1.5. Both a nomination to declare the site in terms of Section 27 of the National Heritage Resources Act no 25 of 1999 (“NHRA”) and an application to have the site provisionally protected according to section 29 were received on 31st July 2014. The provisional protection was sought in order to prevent the open cast mining operation proposed by Aquila and due to the threat, SAHRA proceeded with this application.
- A1.6. The nomination and provisional protection application were submitted by Werksmans Attorney on behalf of Calshel Investments (adjacent landowners), The Traditional Healers Organisation, KARA Institute, Grace Masuku and Bongani Khumalo.
- A1.7. On 29th August 2014, HRM committee recommended the approval of the provisional protection and this was confirmed by Council on 25th October 2014. However, an appeal against the decision was lodged with Minister of Arts of Culture (as per section 49 of NHRA) by Aquila Steel stating procedural discrepancies as the reason for appealing
- A1.8. As per section 49 (2), a Tribunal was appointed and ruled on 16th May 2016 that SAHRA must consider the application *de novo*; and that the landowner and other interested and affected parties are afforded the opportunity to make representations and/or be heard. There was no ruling delivered on the grading of the site.
- A1.9. Following the ruling, the nominators commissioned further research regarding the cultural and spiritual significance of the mountain, in particular. They, therefore, requested to submit these supplementary studies, which was received by SAHRA on 23rd April 2018.
- A1.10. In the interim, Motjoli Real Estate (Pty) Ltd, a majority owner of Rakana Consolidated Mines (Pty) Ltd, Aquila’s broad based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) partner, acquired Aquila’s Meletse Iron Ore project (including associated farms). The new landowners intend keeping and protecting the cave as a significant “African Holy Site” (Motjoli’s name) by linking the cultural and ecological values of the site. They intend doing this by establishing a conservation area on the Farm Randstephne 455KQ, which is the portion of the property on which the cave is situated.
- A1.11. NGT Holdings (Pty) Ltd were appointed as the lead project managers and independent heritage consultants to manage and develop an Integrated Conservation Management Plan (ICMP) for the cave. The draft ICMP has been submitted to SAHRA as part of the landowner’s submissions in the case.

- A1.12. Following the supplementary submission made by the nominators after the Tribunal ruling, both parties were invited to make representations to SAHRA's Grading and Declarations Review Committee (GDRC) on the 27th February 2019 in Cape Town. It was at this meeting that Motjoli revealed that they had received the mining rights for the Farm Donkerpoort and parts of the Randstephne. The nominators have lodged a High Court application to have the mining rights reviewed and set aside.
- A1.13. Motjoli provided a written undertaking on 1st March 2019 that the area subjected to the nomination is not under any immediate threat of any mining activity as issued in the mining rights. As Motjoli were preparing a submission to SAHRA, they offered to extend the undertaking to the end of December 2019. Due to the lockdown, SAHRA's verification and assessment processes were delayed and an extension of the undertaking was requested, which Motjoli agreed to until the end of August 2020.
- A1.1.4 While both parties agree that the Madimatle cave needs to be protected, the contestation is whether the Meletse Mountain holds the same cultural heritage significance. Through the numerous submissions made to SAHRA there are two very opposing schools of thought. One position is that the Meletse Mountain has neither, spiritual or cultural significance and is in no way connect to the Madimatle Cave (Pistorius 2015; Masuku 2019; de Bruyn 2019b, Tomose 2019). While the other position argues for the integral connection of the cave and mountain; and therefore, the high cultural significance of both the Madimatle Cave and Meletse Mountain (Mtuwa 1964; Motshekga & Mosala 2014; Malibye 1997; van Vuuren 2019, van Vollenhoven 2018 & 2020; Coplan & Moopelo 2020).
- A1.15. In order to assist with the verification and assessment of the site as nominated, SAHRA appointed an independent expert, Geo-Environmental and Technical Services (report attached).

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1. PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION

- 1.1. The purpose of this submission is to discuss whether Madimatle, consisting of the Gatkop Cave and Meletse Mountain, as nominated, is of Grade 1 Significance.

2. LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. A quick note on the naming of the heritage resources identified. In the nomination that SAHRA received, reference is made to two resources, namely a cave and a mountain. There have been disputes and confusion regarding the names of the resources. The cave has generally been referred to as the Gatkop cave but has also at times been called Madimatle (van Vuuren 2014; 2019 Pistorius 2015, Masuku 2019, de Bruyn 2019a&2019b; Tomose et al 2019; Tomose 2019, Coplan & Moopelo 2020). In the same way, the mountain nominated has been referred to as the Meletse Mountain and Madimatle. In the nomination, both the mountain and the cave are referred together as Madimatle. An additional smaller mountain has been identified and referred to as the Gatkop/Madimatle Mountain.
- 2.2. Therefore, for the purposes of this submission the following will apply.
- As the majority of researchers have made reference to the cave situated on the Farm Randstephne as the Madimatle Cave, the same reference will remain, Madimatle Cave.
 - The Mountain situated on the remainder of Farm Donkerpoort and is considered to be the highest peak in area, is referred to as the Meletse Mountain.

- c) The smaller mountain identified by the landowners as a potentially having a link to the cave and is approximately 2km from the cave, is referred to as the Gatkop Mountain. The peak has been so named in topographical maps (Figure 2 in Almond's report (2012)).
- d) Madimatle refers to the area, as has been reiterated in a number of interviews conducted by various researchers, in particular to the mountain range Almond (2012) refers to as the Gatkop-Meletse Mountain Range (Makgae et al 2020).

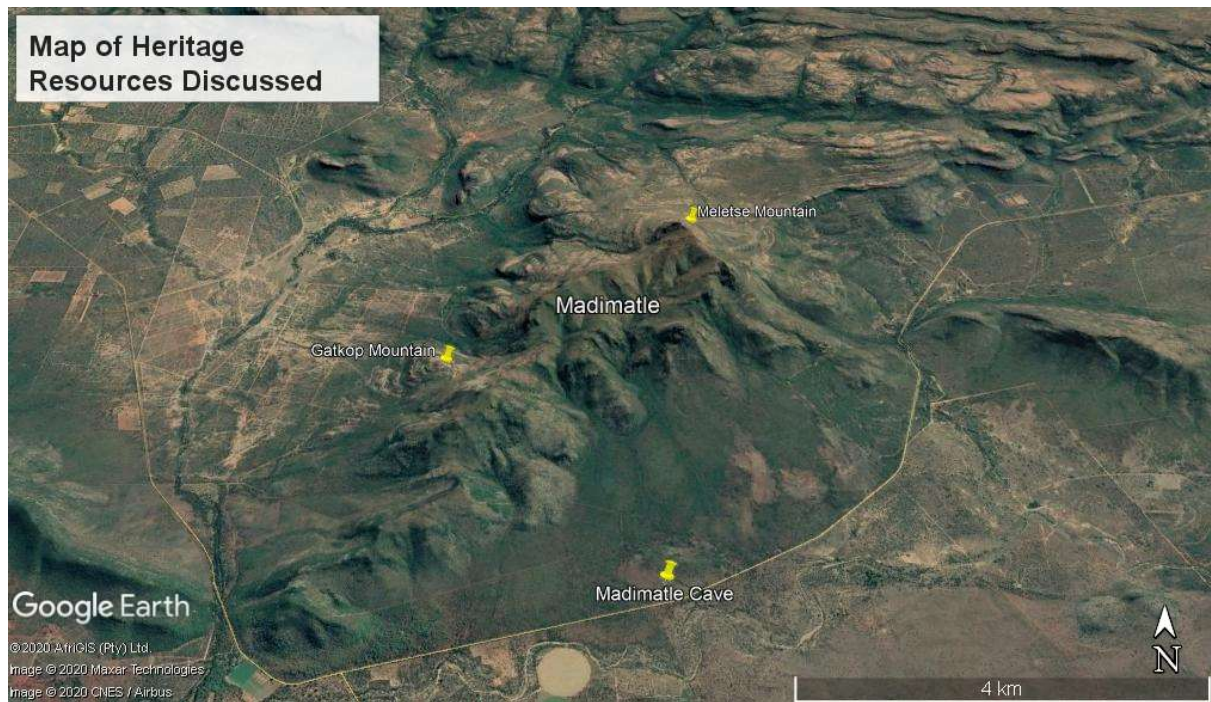


Figure 1: Map showing location of the heritage resources

- 2.3. Madimatle (inclusive of the Madimatle Cave and Meletse Mountain) occurs on the Remainder of Farm Donkerpoort 448KQ and Randstephne 455 KQ in the Thabazimbi Local Municipality in the Waterberg District in the Limpopo Province. The site is approximately 30km from Thabazimbi town. The surrounding farms are largely either cattle or game farms.
- 2.4. The Madimatle Cave is a large dolomitic cave in the southern foothills of the Meletse –Gatkop Mountain Range (Almond 2012). The cave occurs on the Randstephne Farm, just off the Zandriverspoort –Donkerpoort dust road. The cave is deep and splits into 2 chambers. There is apparently water deeper in the cave and the cave is home and a breeding site to a number of bat species (Kearney & Seamark 2012). There has been some research into the archaeology of the cave (Hall 1981 cited in Almond 2012; Pistorius 2015) in which wooden kraals and large scatterings of Late Iron Age pottery was found. The wooden kraals inside the cave have since degraded. The cave was probably used as a refuge during the Mfecane and later from European Trekboers.

2.5. The Meletse Mountain occurs on the remainder of Farm Donkerpoort. It is the highest peak in the area. The Mountain is said to be culturally and spiritually linked to the caves. The traditional healers emphasized that they enter the mountain through the cave and thereby visit their ancestors. The Mountain also has number traditionally medicinal plants such as *Helichrysum odoratissimum* ("Imphepho") and *Xerophyta retinervis* ("Bobbejaanstert"). It is on the slopes of this mountain where the main mining activity will take place.

2.6. Other resources have through the many studies conducted on the properties, been identified, such as (Miller 2011, Pistorius 2015, Makgae et al 2020):

- Historical Homesteads
- Graves (both marked and unmarked)
- Stonewalls and stonewalled enclosures
- Evidence of mining – smelting sites and possible furnaces
- Natural spring

While the identification of these sites is important, they were not specified in the nomination submitted to SAHRA. The impact studies rate the resources from medium to high significance and offer mitigating measures for the mine of the sites.

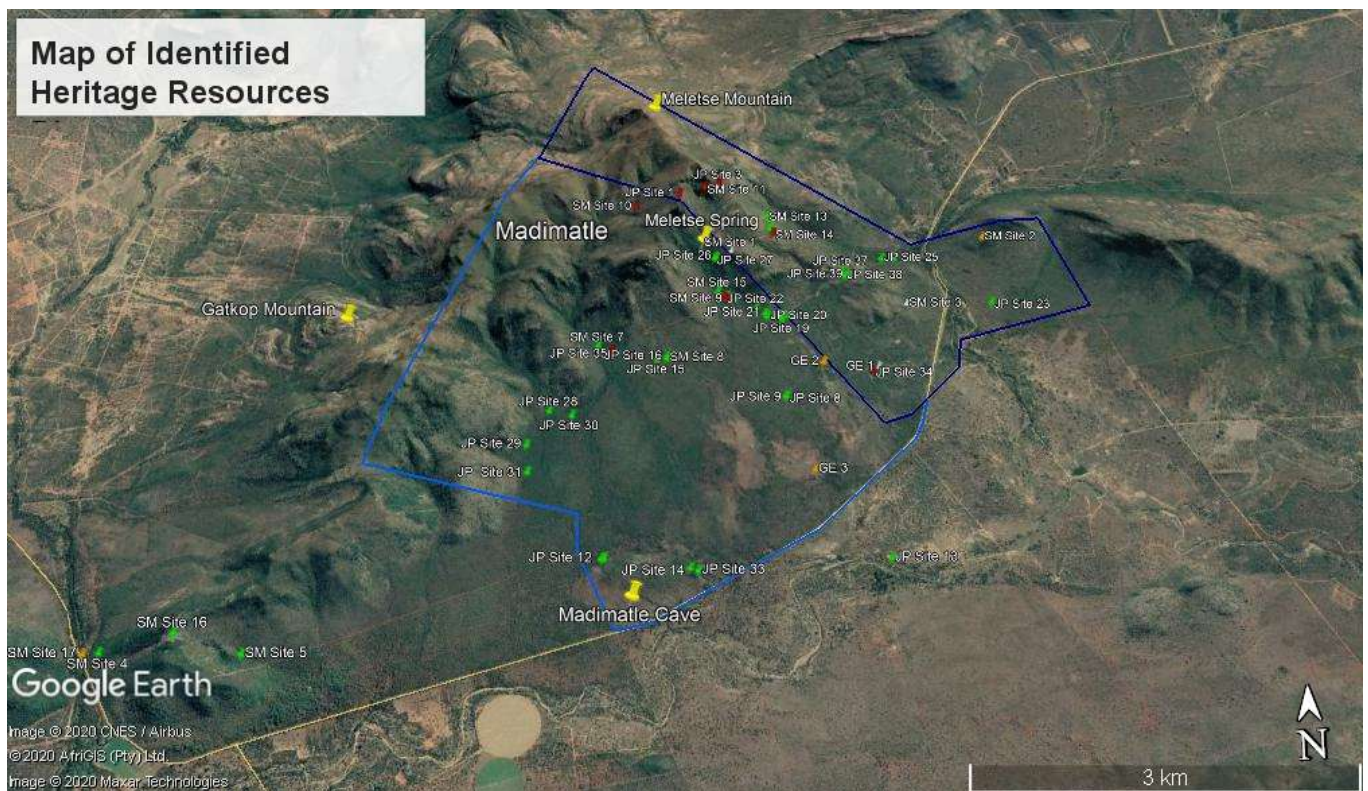


Figure 2: Map showing all the heritage resources identified on the properties

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE SITE

- 3.1. Historically the Waterberg region, in which Madimatle is situated has been occupied by diverse cultural groups (Tomose et al 2019, de Bruyn 2019a & 2019b; Tomose 2019); and, since the 1800s, includes the Ba Kgatla (van Vuuren 2014).
- 3.2. In African Religions both mountains and caves are considered to be fundamental natural features and are considered sacred due to the mystical powers they possess. They are important for traditional and religious purposes as well as for the natural resources they provide. (Motshekga and Mosala 2014)
- 3.3. Mountains, in particular, are strongly associated to ancestral worship and are seen to be ancestral places of where the gods reside (Motshekga and Mosala 2014) and have healing powers. They are closely associated with the evolution of humanity and its continued interaction with the ancestors and gods.
- 3.4. Caves also play a prominent role as spiritual gateways to the mountains. In Tswana traditional beliefs, caves have a strong association to Genesis or Creation. All people are believed to have been created by a supreme being, Modimo, who emerged from a cave, Lôle, in Botswana. Similarly, according to Ba Kgatla oral traditions, the Ba Kgatla emerged from the Madimatle Cave (van Vuuren 2014).
- 3.5. There has been consistent evidence and reiterations that the Meletse Mountain is directly connected to the Madimatle Cave, both in terms of the spiritual linkages, medicinal plants and the healing waters of the natural spring (van Vuuren 2014, 2019;; Coplan & Moopelo 2020; Makgae et al 2020)
- 3.6. African traditional religion calls for a holistic view of both tangible and intangible heritage, with cultural and spiritual values attached to places and natural features, including mountains, caves, springs, bodies of water, waterfalls, forests etc. Batswana people, therefore, see the landscape in the same way – individual places are wholly integrated into the landscape and cannot be disentangled.
- 3.7. Madimatle, refers to the area, the landscape which is revered as a highly sacred place. Within Madimatle there is the Madimatle Cave, Gatkop Mountain and the Meletse Mountain, all forming a continuum from the Gatkop Mountain to Meletse Mountain. Madimatle does not only refer to the cave or the mountain but to the area surrounding the cave, which includes the Meletse mountain (Makgae et al 2020).
- 3.8. Meletse Mountain, meaning “*the Mountain of Water*”, has a perennial spring which is considered and revered as sacred (Makgae et al 2020). The water from the spring is believed to have healing powers and cannot be tampered with (Coplan & Moopelo 2020). Traditional healers still access the water for such healing and source of traditional medicine.
- 3.9. It is further believed that a large powerful mythical water snake, (Mamlambo/ Kgwanypa/ Kganyapa) lives on the Meletse Mountain (van Vuuren 2014a, Coplan & Moopelo 2020, Makgae et al 2020). It is believed that the snake protects sacred sites

that provide water (pools/streams) for it to live in. The snake's presence is marked but the big light and movements accompanied by strong winds. The snake is an important component of the "ukuthwasa" cultural and spiritual rituals and ceremonies (Makgae et al 2020).

- 3.10. This quote below from an interview conducted by Coplan and Moopelo (2020) reiterates the connection between the cave and the mountain as well as the presence of the water snake:

"The ancestral spirits reside on both mountains and cave. These two areas are not separate because both of them are the ancestors' dwelling place. They live in the depths of the cave and on the heights of Meletse. This whole area belongs to them. Above and below. The mystical snake that is ruining all the constructions that are on the mountain and is causing all this horrendous lightning is a guardian of the ancestral planes which are both physical and spiritual.....There is shared mythical power between cave and mountain. This whole place, not just the cave, is Madimatle and that entire mountain is Meletse".

- 3.11. From the above, it is argued that the cultural beliefs are integral to the landscape, with the individual places of cultural importance being related and mutually reinforcing (van Vuuren 2019; Makgae et al 2020; Coplan & Moopelo 2020), therefore the Meletse Mountain can not be seen as separate from the Madimatle Cave nor the Madimatle landscape and therefore Madimatle encompasses a unique unitary cultural landscape.
- 3.12. Madimatle, as a cultural landscape, holds significant spiritual and cultural value to the BaKgatla, traditional healers and those that practise and belong to a variety of African Christian denominations.

4. SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strongly connected to community sense of place (Aucamp et al 2014) ○ Highly revered sacred site ○ Medicinal plants and natural spring believed to have health waters. ○ Gatkop is an important breeding site for a number of bat species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diseases in the Cave carried by bats (Histoplasma etc) ○ Littering ○ Lack of ablutions for traditional healers ○ Contestation over the mountain ○ Before this process, the history of the site has not been well documented. No archaeological excavations to further exploration on the surface archaeological finds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tourism ○ Place of worship ○ Education centre planned at the Cave about the spiritual/religious significance of the site and the environment within which it occurs (MaRIC) ○ Planned medicinal nursery ○ Bat conservation ○ Cooperation between the landowners and traditional healers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mining, especially on the mountain ○ Protracted legal processes.

5. MOTIVATION FOR NATIONAL DECLARATION

5.1 Through the number of traditional healers visiting cave, the evidence of their rituals both at the entrance of the cave as well as within the chambers, it is clear that cave has strong and special spiritual significance and is closely associated to oral traditions and living heritage. The cave is used by local community, traditional healers, and faith-based organisations across southern Africa (Tomose et al 2019).

5.2. While the evidence of the significance and importance of the mountain is not as visible, it cannot be seen as separate from the cave. As the highest peak in area, it is this mountain that is seen to be reaching up to the ancestors. The cave is the spiritual gateway to the peak (van Vollenhoven 2018, van Vuuren 2019, Coplan & Moopelo 2020, Makgae et al 2020). This is further supported by, again, another quote from the interviews conducted by Coplan and Moopelo:

“You see this mountain with three peaks is sometimes called Meletse, but that highest peak is properly Meletse. It is the highest peak and it and the cave both belong to the ancestors... It's all one place, the mountain and the cave are one and the same area due to the ancestral presence in both places, they are both ruled and dominated by power, ...”

5.3. The site is therefore significant in terms of its Social Value:

- a. It has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons:

The site is important as a place that is highly valued and revered by the Ba Kgatla people, traditional healers and other African Christian denominations for cultural, spiritual and religious reasons.

- b. Importance in contributing to a community's sense of place.

In addition, the site is very strongly associated to both the community's sense of place, both to people living within close proximity to site, BaKgatla people dispersed further afield (eg Grace Masuku) and Traditional Healers.

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1. AS PER APPLICANTS

“Meletse Mountain and the Gatkop caves (“Madimatle”) source their interlinked and intertwined significance in African Christian religion, traditional customary spirituality and healing, and in South Africa’s history of battle and loss, particularly of the BaKgatla people. Over time, Madimatle shared its significance with many other tribes and communities across the Southern African region. Madimatle is understood to be “the highest seat” of all BaKgatla ancestors who fought pre- colonial battles on the mountain, resulting in many people who died in the caves. Madimatle has kept its living heritage in the form of communities being able to access it freely for purposes of “ukuphahla” “go phatlha”, ie. an ability to communicate, meditate, pray, fast, and pay

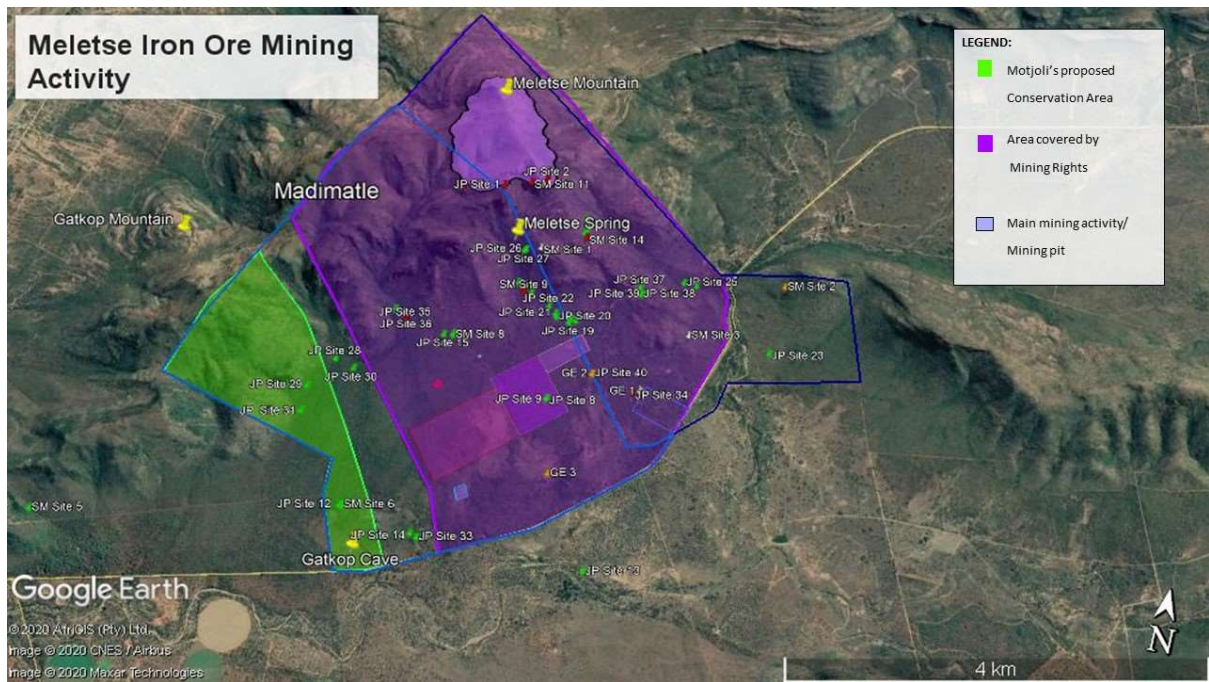
homage to ancestors in Madimatle. The mountain known as “beautiful blood” is understood to possess unprecedented healing powers. Thousands of people have and still travel from various parts of the country and from Southern Africa, seeking physical, mental, physiological and spiritual healing. Ordinary communities and traditional healers alike, frequent Madimatle for various pilgrimages, ranging from one-day long to two- week long “visits”. Traditional healers and communities have throughout history, managed to access Madimatle freely in order to be healed, to meditate, to communicate with ancestors and to collect herbs and plants with healing powers. It is believed that God resides on Madimatle, it is a place of “all origins”, and it is the source of ancestral spirits. The blood of the BaKgatla ancestors that was spilled in Madimatle during pre-colonial times is essentially what gives the mountain and the caves significant spiritual power of healing. Through this Spiritual and Mystical power and significance, the identity of the BaKgatla people are closely linked to Madimatle.”

6.2. AS PER LANDOWNERS:

“Madimatle Cave is an important site cultural and spiritual site (i.e. it is associated with the birth and ancestry of the BaKgatla people, and a site of spiritual potency (i.e. it is used by the community, various traditional healers and faith groups for prayer and worship (communicating messages and meaning between the real and spiritual world)). It is also a home and reproduction site to a variety of bat species (biodiversity).”

7. INDICATION OF OWNERS’ ATTITUDE

- 7.1. At the time that the nomination was submitted to SAHRA, the properties were owned by Aquila Steel South Africa. In 2018 the properties were bought by Motjoli Real Estate Company (Pty) Ltd. Motjoli Real Estate is a wholly owned subsidiary of Motjoli Resources (Pty) Ltd (referred to henceforth as Motjoli or the owners).
- 7.2. Aquila opposed to the provisional protection of the Meletse Mountain in 2014 citing procedural discrepancies. They, however, conceded to the protection of the cave, although they did not agree to the cave being graded as a Grade 1 site, arguing that the site is of Grade 2 significance.
- 7.3. Similarly, Motjoli, the new landowners, have shown commitment to protecting the cave and developing a conservation area around the cave on the Farm Randstephne. However, Motjoli is the current holder of a mining right over the Farm Donkerpoort and parts of Randstephne that have not been set aside for the conservation area, in terms of the Mineral Resources Development Act no. 28 of 2002. The main mining activity will take place over the Meletse Mountain and therefore, the declaration of the mountain is indirect conflict with their mining interests.



- 7.4. Motjoli supports the protection of the Madimatle Cave and what they believe to be the associated mountain, the Gatkop Mountain. They are not in support of the protection of the Meletse Mountain and have argued that the spiritual link is not to the Meletse Mountain but rather could be to the closer Gatkop Mountain by virtue of its proximity to the cave. Motjoli contend that the Meletse Mountain does not have any spiritual significance or any links to the cave and therefore is not of any heritage value, and that the values associated to the cave should not be extended to the mountain.
- 7.5. Motjoli also feel that the cave does not meet the criteria of national declaration, but that it does have grade 2 provincial significance as the site is significant to the Tswana speaking community.
- 7.6. In addition Motjoli are suspicious of the nominators motives for nominating the site, and believe that the nomination is largely driven by the neighbouring farm owners who are only trying to protect their own commercial interests and avoid the impacts that the mining may have on their game farming and wildlife tourism.
- 7.7. Motjoli in their commitment to protecting the Madimatle Cave, have dedicated a portion of land on the farm Randstephne 455 KQ which includes the cave and extends to the Gatkop Mountain for conservation. The 240 hectares will be dedicated to research, education of both the cultural heritage values (spiritual/religious, archaeological and historical) and biodiversity conservation values (bats) of the site. In Motjoli's view this will offset the planned mining on Farm Donkerpoort 448KQ.

8. CURRENT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

8.1. Motjoli appointed NGT Holdings to develop an Integrated Conservation Management Plan for the development, grading and nomination of the Madimatle Cave as an “African Holy Site”. A draft ICMP has been drafted and submitted to SAHRA (see attached).

8.2. Further, Motjoli intends to develop a conservation area (240 hectares with 177 hectares buffer zone) aimed at retaining and protecting the Madimatle Cave, develop a research and interpretation centre for the study of the cultural uses of the cave, bats and other ecological studies, and develop an indigenous medicinal nursery to contribute to the conservation of such plants and research of African medicinal plants and healing.

8.3. Infrastructure development such as restrooms and ablutions, pathways for better access, fencing the conservation area, guardhouse, parking, interpretation are also planned.

8.3. There is currently no conservation management plan available for the Meletse Mountain but the Environmental Management Plan for the planned mining operations.

9. DESCRIPTION OF SITE BOUNDARIES

9.1. If the site is considered as a cultural landscape, it will be necessary to grade and declare what is considered as Madimatle. These boundaries will need to be verified on the ground with accurate GPS coordinates or survey.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. It is recommended that Madimatle, consisting both of the Gatkop Cave and the Meletse Mountain, is graded as a Grade 1 site.

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Recommendation approved by GDRC		Recommendation not approved by GDRC	
Ms M. Nkhasi-Lesaoana Chairperson: GDRC	Signature		
Date:			