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15th September 2014

Mariagrazia Galimberti
South African Heritage Resources Agency

Dear Mariagrazia

PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENT AT THE HANTAM NATIONAL BOTANICAL GARDEN, NIEUWOUDTVILLE

This letter serves to inform SAHRA of the proposed development to be carried out at the Hantam National Botanical Garden on the southern outskirts of Nieuwoudtville in the Northern Cape Province. The development will take place on Portion 3 of Farm 660. The project is still in the very early stages with an application form just submitted to the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). There is as yet no Background Information Document (BID) for the project, hence the present letter.

Development proposal

The following extract from the Basic Assessment application form serves to describe the proposed works:

The Hantam National Botanical Garden is located off Oorlogskloof Road, Nieuwoudtville, Northern Cape, South Africa. The garden was established in 2007. Hantam lies on the interface of the Succulent and Nama Karoo Biomes and is home to 1350 indigenous plant species, 80 of which are range-restricted species considered to be endangered. The Hantam National Botanical garden is recognised in the Namakwa District Sector Plan (2008) as a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA). The primary purpose of the garden is to conserve the unique diversity of plants, particularly the bulb species in the Fynbos/Karoo ecosystems of the region. Hantam National Botanical Garden is SANBI's first wild garden in South Africa and covers over 6200 hectares. Of these 6200 hectares only a small portion has been developed (a section of 660/3)¹.

The entire developed portion of the site as well as the remaining, undeveloped section of Farm 660/3 falls within the Fynbos Biome. The predominant ecosystem in the area is Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos which is classified as "Vulnerable" Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA2). In addition the site lies within a formal protected area and lies approximately 9.5km north-east of the Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve, approximately 3km south-east of the Nieuwoudtville Wild Flower Reserve and 5km south of the Gannabos Protected Area.

Existing buildings and infrastructure at Hantam National Botanical Garden

Existing infrastructure currently on the developed portion of Farm 660/3 consists of the following:

- Access Road (entering the site from the north-west)
- Administration Building
- Meeting Room
- Staff Kitchen
- Guest building

¹ : <http://www.sanbi.org/gardens/hantam>

- Water Purification Plant
- Water Reservoir
- Workshop
- Small Garage
- Small Shed

Proposed infrastructure developments for the Hantam National Botanical Garden

SANBI has been allocated funds by the DEA for the period 2013/14- 2015/16 for refurbishment, upgrading, repair and maintenance of existing immovable infrastructure, vehicles and equipment as well as the construction of new infrastructure.

The DEA funded developments will address the needs of SANBI from an administrative research and educational and tourism perspective.

The proposed infrastructure upgrades for the Hantam National Botanical Garden will be undertaken in two phases:

Phase 1:

Phase 1 will entail the redevelopment and alterations to the existing infrastructure on site situated on the developed section of Farm 660/3. Redevelopment will consist of the following:

- Reorganisation of vehicular access and parking
- Create additional staff parking near the administration building
- Reconfiguration of public ablution facilities
- Extend existing staff kitchen to accommodate the public ablutions
- Refurbishment of the guest house to become a meeting room
- Reorganisation of the existing buildings to provide staff facilities
- Creating pedestrian linkages with the existing guest building, admin building and ablutions
- Dismantling and disposing off all asbestos roofing
- Repairing the leaking reservoir
- Refurbishment of the water storage barn

All Phase 1 activities will occur within the existing development footprint. Given the disturbed nature of the developed area little to no vegetation will be impacted by the redevelopment activities.

Phase 2:

Phase 2 will entail the construction of a new, environmentally appropriate research facility with a small access road and parking area. The research facility will be approximately 740m² in extent and will be located on a small portion of vacant undeveloped land on Farm 660/3. The research facility will include the following:

- Laboratories
- Herbarium
- Storage Rooms
- Drying Ovens for flowers
- Conference Facility

Construction activities will involve the clearance of just over 740 m² of indigenous vegetation currently located on this site to allow space for the research facility and associated infrastructure.

Proposed Heritage Impact Assessment

I have been appointed as heritage practitioner to conduct a site inspection and produce a Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed project. The assessment will include archaeology and the landscape/R27 scenic route which are felt to be the two most significant aspects for the site. One alteration will affect a

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structure greater than 60 years of age, but the structure could not be graded more than 3B (in terms of the Heritage Western Cape grading scheme) and thus should not require specialist study during the impact assessment phase; the structures will, however, be briefly described. It is thus considered that the proponent would need to obtain a built environment permit for these alterations at the time of implementation.

Although the site for the new building falls within the green zone on the SAHRIS Palaeomap (green = moderate significance = desktop study; see map below), it is felt that because of the relatively small footprint and limited depth of the required excavations, most of which is likely to be within the superficial sediments, no palaeontological specialist study should be conducted. The following comment in support of this was obtained directly from John Almond by email (dated 4th September 2014):

“The development site is underlain by glacially-related rocks of the Dwyka Group that in this region comprise both tillites as well as glacio-fluvial channels. The palaeosensitivity of the site is low and, given the small footprint, I consider that a palaeontological study is not necessary.”



Extract from the SAHRIS Palaeomap showing the location of the proposed development (very centre of image approximately where 'Northern' appears).

Yours sincerely

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