

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT
As part of the
BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS
For the
**PROPOSED IBISI CEMETERY, WITHIN THE UMZIMKHULU LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY**

1. Introduction

The Umzimkhulu Local Municipality has identified the need to establish a cemetery site in the town of Ibisi. Before the expansion of the cemetery can commence, environmental authorisation from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, in compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations of 2010, is required. In order to obtain this authorisation a Basic Assessment is currently being undertaken by Enviroedge on behalf of the Umzimkhulu Local Municipality.

2. The Project

The Umzimkhulu Local Municipality has identified the need to establish a formal cemetery site for the community of Ibisi. The proposed Ibisi Cemetery site is located approximately 20km south west of the Umzimkhulu central business district in ward 11 of the Umzimkhulu Municipality. An existing graveyard exists in the village of Ibisi and the proposed cemetery establishment aims to incorporate the existing site. The proposed site is located along a local road which bisects the site, off the R56 road. The site is situated to the north east of the village centre on a vacant portion of land which land use is subsistence agriculture. An existing grave yard exists and it is proposed that the cemetery establishment incorporates the existing graveyard. The proposed cemetery establishment is planned to provide burial sites which will cater to the Ibisi and nearby communities for the next twenty (20) years, and as such, the cemetery expansion would require approximately two hectares of land. The project is aimed to provide a burial location in close proximity for the local community, so as to prevent 'back yard burials' and also to help reduce the need to travel to district cemetery sites. The cemetery establishment aims to cater for the cultural needs within the municipal area. The proposed site is located 30° 24'11.32"S 29° 53' 39.42"E.

3. The Biophysical Environment

Rivers and topography: The proposed cemetery site is located to the north east of the village centre at an elevation of approximately 615*masl*. The Bisi river is located to the west of the proposed site. Two non-perennial drainage features exist to the east and drain towards the Bisi River. The site is situated on relatively level ground at the base of a west facing slope.

Geology and Soils: Mucina and Rutherford (2006) describe the geology as acidic, leached, heavy soils derived from Karoo Supergroup sediments and intrusive Karoo Dolerites. Glenrosa and Mispah soils also occur.

Vegetation: The study area falls within the Savanna Biome, and Mucina and Rutherford (2006) classify the vegetation group as Ngongoni Veld (SVs 4). Common features of this vegetation class is dense tall grassland that is overwhelmingly dominated by unpalatable, wiry Ngongoni grass and a low species diversity. The study area presented indications of a forb rich grassland and scattered trees, with some scattered alien invasive trees such as *Acacia mearnsii* (Black wattle). Subsistence agricultural gardens occurs to the east, and cattle grazing occurs across the site due to limited fencing around the existing grave yard.

Conservation Value: The Ngongoni Veld is classified as vulnerable with an associated target value of 25%.

Climate: The study area mainly receives summer rainfall with some winter rainfall. Infrequent frosts do occur. Some valleys are sheltered and may show weak rain shadow effects. The average annual precipitation ranges from 700mm to 1100mm.

4. Public Participation

Members of the public have the opportunity to be consulted during the Public Participation Process. If you would like additional information or would like to be part of this process please register with Steven Whitaker using the contact details below.

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Figure 1. Google Earth Image showing location of the proposed cemetery site expansion.

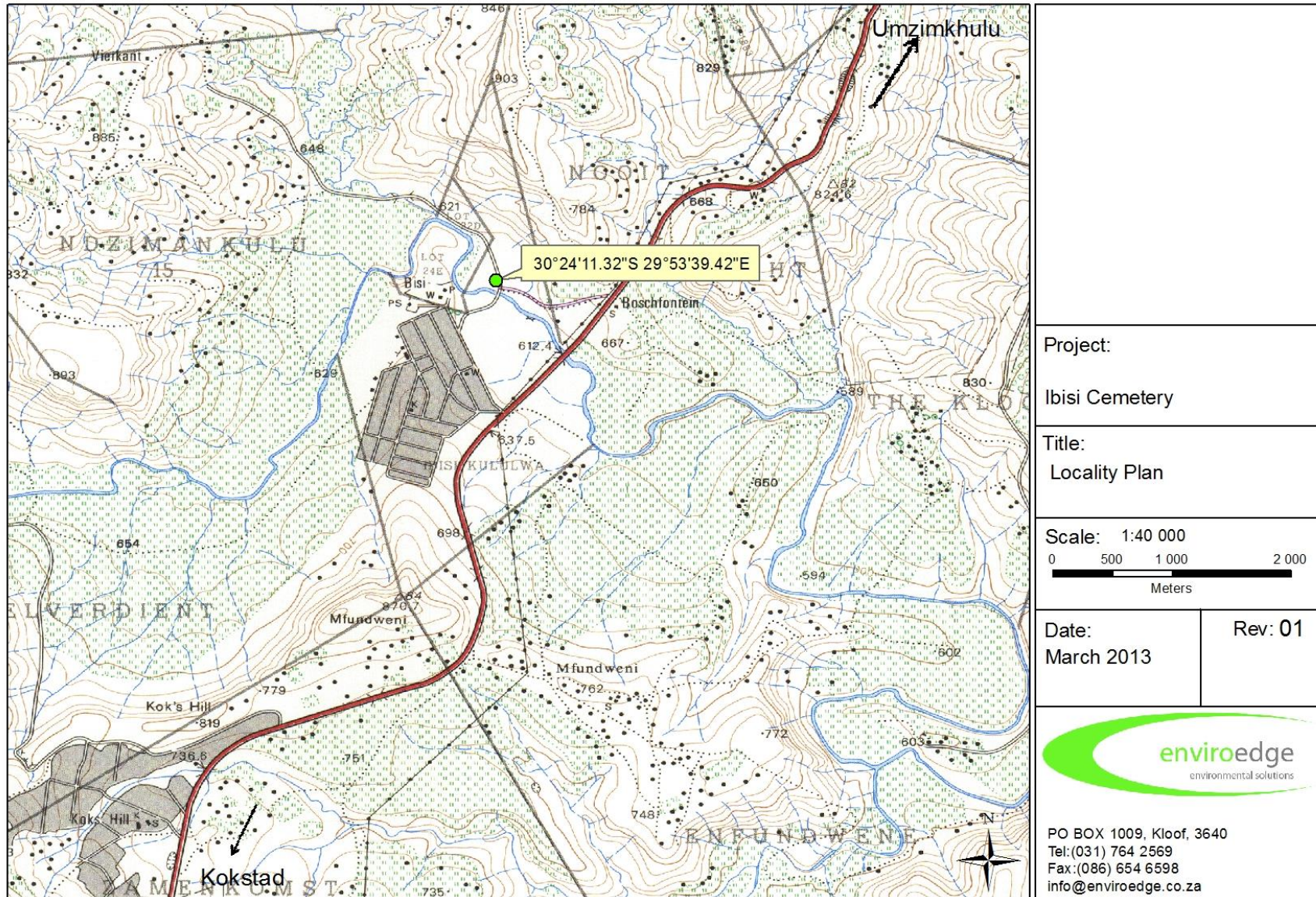


Figure 2. Topographical Plan showing the Ibsi cemetery site location.