

Mr D. Katsetse

APM Officer: South African Heritage Resources Agency

26 January 2022

RE: AMENDMENTS TO THE K2 PERMIT (NO. 3219)

My letter to the SAHRA, dated 03 June 2021, refers. It narrates the historical background to various proposed interventions at this archaeological site.

We were previously granted an archaeological permit, under Section 35 of the NHRA, to address the issue of soil erosion at K2, Mapungubwe. Historically, soil from the excavated area was dumped over the hill, creating a new unnatural slope, with a steep gradient. This slope has been more exposed to soil erosion. Of greater concern is that the soil that was deposited over this hill still has archaeological artifacts in it. As it erodes, therefore, these are being re-deposited in the lower areas, thus affecting the archaeological context of materials in the surrounding areas. Besides this concern, failure to curb this soil erosion is likely to result in the landscape being undesirable to the tourists visiting K2, making it an unattractive offer to the tourists.

Originally, our intention was to plant grass seeds along the slope, especially those areas significantly exposed to erosion. This was scheduled for the winter period of July 2021. Similarly, we intended to use polymer along the same areas to help bind the soil together, thus withstanding erosion. The use of polymer was not going to inhibit the germination of seeds. However, since the permit was issued by SAHRA, and as per our previous interaction with the entity on this issue in October 2021, there have been internal discussions which led to a change of plan. Due to concerns that similar interventions had been undertaken on the same location, it became undesirable to apply the interventions we had recommended to SAHRA in our application for the archaeological permit.

One of the options we considered was to have the soil that was deposited over the slope from the excavation area completely removed. We intended to source Google images to historically assess how the slope would have been prior to the deposition of soil from the excavated area. Our aim, therefore, was to remove the layers of the deposited soil with the proposal of taking it back to the former primary location. However, we have had to revise this intervention because of the advice received that it will be a safety threat for

those working to remove the deposited soil as a result of the steep slope. Because of its steepness, it is thus unsafe to work on. Therefore, this suggestion proved unpractical. Not only that, but the cost of removing the deposited soil would have been prohibitive.

Going forward, we have decided to undertake the following:

1. Build a small retaining wall along the edge of the cliff (figure 1). The main purpose of this wall shall be to lower the intensity of water running down the man-made slope, thus giving existing vegetation time to establish itself even more.
2. This proposed wall, to be built as a gabion structure, shall be about 175m in length (300mm/0,3m in height above ground) - from the existing path going upslope to the extreme left hand side of the cliff. To provide it with the much needed stability, part of the retaining wall will be submerged underground (500mm/0.5m).
3. Because of its nature, it will still allow water to infiltrate through it, rather slowly. As a result, the wall will ensure that a man-made and an unintentional dam does not result from its construction.
4. In terms of visual impact, stones that will be used for this retaining wall shall easily blend in the surrounding environment, so that we do not have a bright, unsightly color at the site. The proposed wall will not, therefore, be visually intrusive and an eyesore. We aim to procure stones from outside the park as we shall not have adequate supply from those that are naturally available within the protected area.

Noting the above-mentioned amendments to the mitigation measures that are proposed to address soil erosion at K2, we kindly request that SAHRA accordingly amends permit no. 3219. Furthermore, the original permit was valid until 31 March 2021. It is our warm request that, if our request for an amendment is approved, the revised permit be valid for a year from the date of issue by SAHRA. We intend to undertake these measures in early March if our request is granted, unless there are circumstances beyond our control.

Kind regards,



Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu

Manager: Archaeology, South African National Parks