



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

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CaseID: 9049

Date: Wednesday August 31, 2016
Page No: 1

Final Comment

In terms of Section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Attention: Sonbesie Solar Power Plant (Pty) Ltd

Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed Sonbessie Photovoltaic Solar Energy Facility near Vryburg, Ratlou Local Municipality, North West Province

Sonbesie Solar Power Plant (Pty) Ltd has contracted Environamics to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development of the Sonbesie Photovoltaic Solar Energy Facility. The proposed development is located on the remaining extent of farm Retreat **o.671 IN** within the Naledi Local Municipality (Vryburg Magisterial District, North West Province). The site is approximately 5km to the south-west of the town of Vryburg.

The development plan for the 264ha PV facility includes the following: An 115MW PV Solar Array; Central inverters; On-site substation; Control facility; other supporting infrastructure (including: current and voltage regulators, internal road network, and fencing).

In an Interim Comment issued on the 29 April 2016, it was requested that the impact on heritage resources by the proposed development footprint be assessed during the EIA phase, and that clear mitigation measures should be provided.

Van Schalkwyk, J. 2016. Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for the development of the proposed Sonbesie Solar Power Plant on a portion of the farm Retreat 671 IN, Vryburg Region, North West Province

A small low density scatter of Middle/Later Stone Age tools was found, but due its low density the site is not significant and it is recommended that the site is considered to be fully recorded by incorporation into the assessment. The remains of an old farmstead were also identified by the visible remains of the foundations of at least two separate buildings, with associated rubbish dump and exotic trees (likely planted indicating an old garden. It is noted that the author states that it is impossible to determine what the impact on heritage resources will entail. It is assumed that this statement was made due to the fact that the layout of the facility has not been supplied as part of the HIA as requested in the previously issued comments. Recommendations provided in the report include that the heritage resources are to be mitigated by means of a small test excavation and mapping of the farmstead and its associated features.



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Almond, J 2016. Palaeontological Heritage Assessment: Combined Desktop & Field-Based study: Proposed Sonbesie Solar Plant on the remaining extent of Farm Retreat 671 near Vryburg, Naledi Local Municipality, North West Province.

The area is underlain at depth by late Archaean (c. 2.6 billion years) sedimentary rocks of the Schmidtsdrif subgroup (Ghaap Group, Transvaal Supergroup). Additionally, sections may also be underlain by Dwyka Group glacial rocks. These formations are overlain or mantled by late Caenozoic calcrete hardpans, sandy soils of possible aeolian origin and relict alluvial gravels related to the Droë Harts River. There were no fossil specimens found during the field survey and the area is therefore classified as having a low negative significance with regards to the palaeontology.

Recommendations provided in the report include that the responsible Environmental Control Officer (ECO) should monitor the construction work and should any fossils be encountered they should be preferably left *in-situ* and SAHRA should be notified. Appropriate mitigation should follow where a qualified palaeontologist must assess the finds and salvage them if necessary with a permit issued by SAHRA.

Final Comment

It must be noted that the quality of the report does not allow SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites (APM) Unit to provide an informed comment, and as such SAHRA APM does not endorse or deny the proposed development. The following conditions and the recommendations provided with the reports must be included in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr):

- The final EIA and all appendices must be submitted to SAHRA and uploaded to the case file;
- The farmstead and historical rubbish heap must be avoided with a buffer of 10m. Should this not be possible, a permit in terms of section 35 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (25 of 1999)(NHRA) be applied for in order for test excavations to be conducted by a professional archaeologists. This must be completed prior to the construction phase;
- If any evidence of archaeological sites or remains (e.g. remnants of stone-made structures, indigenous ceramics, bones, stone artefacts, ostrich eggshell fragments, charcoal and ash concentrations), fossils, stromatolites or other categories of heritage resources are found during the proposed development, SAHRA APM Unit (Natasha Higgitt/John Gribble 021 462 5402) must be alerted. Instances of stromatolite mats have been identified in the surrounding areas, and the Environmental Control Officer must be alerted to this;
- If unmarked human burials are uncovered, the SAHRA Burial Grounds and Graves (BGG) Unit (Itumeleng Masiteng/Mimi Seetelo 012 320 8490), must be alerted immediately. A professional archaeologist or palaeontologist, depending on the nature of the finds, must be contracted as soon as

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possible to inspect the findings. If the newly discovered heritage resources prove to be of archaeological or palaeontological significance, a Phase 2 rescue operation may be required;

- Should the proposed development be granted an EA, SAHRA must be informed and the decision letter must be uploaded to the case file.

Should you have any further queries, please contact the designated official using the case number quoted above in the case header.

Yours faithfully

Natasha Higgitt
Heritage Officer
South African Heritage Resources Agency

John Gribble
Manager: Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit / Acting Manager: Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit
South African Heritage Resources Agency

ADMIN:

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/354788>