

Final Decision

In terms of Section 27(18) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Attention: North West - Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism
Development House
Cnr Provident Str and University Drive
Mmabatho 2735

Improvements to visitor facilities, site infrastructure and heritage site conservation measures at the Taung Skull World Heritage Site.

Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Statement

SAHRA supports the no-go option in respect of the camping area. An alternative location must be explored within the buffer zone. The Thomeng site is a sensitive area both as wetland and in respect of spiritual connections the local community has with the site (p.22).

Lime Kiln Area

The proposed development, in its current conceptual format, cannot be supported. The nature of the kiln area demands an approach that addresses the particular site context- the 'face' of the cliff and the remaining fabric dictates that great care should be taken in respect of the form, materiality and spatiality in the immediate surrounds of the site- both from the overlooking hill as well as from below. The introduction of a parking area of the suggested scale and coloration will not be approved.

Parking area (south of New Town/Buxton Road)

SAHRA concurs with the report that the receptivity towards additional infrastructure is very low and therefore needs careful analysis, planning and conceptualisation.

Thomeng Falls

The parking area at Thomeng Falls and the introduction of the arched road is of concern.

SAHRA is not aware of a detailed application having been prepared and/or submitted in respect of the extensive and visually obtrusive parking. The outcome of this has been the extensive scarring of the natural landscape close to what can conceivably be viewed as a 'sacred' site. This has a significant negative visual impact because of the elevated nature of the, now scarred, natural landscape.

SAHRA advises that immediate site repair is engaged in and that the parking be designed in such a way that it integrates with its context.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All recommendations, nos 1-12, Part Five: Conclusions and recommendations, with the exception of the lime kiln intervention, is supported. The lime kiln intervention should be reconceptualised so that the outcome ties into the rural-mining-industrial context.

Heritage Management Plan

The HMP describes the management and mitigation measures that are to be implemented in order to address the heritage impacts of the proposed "Improvement on Visitor Facilities, Site infrastructure and Heritage Conservation Measures at the Taung Skull world Heritage Site".

The presence of a heritage specialist with landscape and construction experience together with a site archaeologist and palaeontologist with a monitoring function for all planning, design, construction, rehabilitation, operational, maintenance and decommissioning functions should be ensured.



All the recommendations in the HMP is supported as reflected on pages 1-3, recommendations 1-17.

Visual Impact Statement

SAHRA concurs with the concerns expressed on page 42 of the VIS in respect of the potential high visual sensitivity node at the new entrance. SAHRA supports the Conclusions and Recommendations on page 47, nos 1-8.

Areas of concern

Component 4: Road into Thomeng and proposed parking areas raises concern particularly around the trajectory. The rationale for this needs to be explained.

Component 8: Site layout for parking (Alternative 1) and entrance area is highly problematic and will require a site visit. The scale of the parking together with the landscaping is problematic. The reason is that it imports vegetation onto the site. The area in question has existing vegetation patterns akin to the larger area. The creation of linear planting patterns, inclusive of its volume is too obvious and imposition.

Component 14: Museum and Amphitheatre in Lime Works Area- Artistic Impression has been discussed earlier as having a major impact. It is too urban an intervention, and coupled with the parking, does not respond well to the context and should be reconsidered as a concept. See earlier comment.

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

Yours faithfully

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Improvements to Taung Skull WHS

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an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

ADMIN:

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/323477>

Terms & Conditions:

1. This approval does not exonerate the applicant from obtaining local authority approval or any other necessary approval for proposed work.
2. If any heritage resources, including graves or human remains, are encountered they must be reported to SAHRA immediately.
3. SAHRA reserves the right to request additional information as required.



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

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