



Interim Comment

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

Attention: Ms Louise Corbett
Aurecon South Africa
Aurecon Centre
1 Century City Drive
Waterford Precinct
Century City I
South Africa

Proposed 40 MW Riemvasmaak Hydropower Station, Orange River, Northern Cape

Orton, J. & Webley, L. December 2012. *Heritage Impact Assessment For Proposed Hydro-Electric Facilities Near Riemvasmaak, Northern Cape*

RVM 1 Hydro Electric Power (Pty) Ltd has proposed the construction of a 40 Megawatt (MW) hydropower station on the Orange River, on the farm Riemvasmaak (Remainder of Farm no. 497 and Portion 1 of Farm no. 498), north of the Augrabies Falls and approximately 40 km north west of Kakamas in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. This land had been part of the Augrabies Falls National Park, but has been returned to displaced members of the Riemvasmaak Community; SANParks still manages the land.

The proposed project will involve the construction of a weir across the Orange River and a combination of pipelines and canals to transport the water headponds. These will feed the water to turbines located within sunken power chambers, topped by above grounds transformers and switchgear. The water will be conveyed back to the Orange River by means of a tailrace tunnel. The proposal will require the construction of access roads and all power will be evacuated along either 33 kV or 132 kV overhead or buried cables, linking to the existing 132 kV transmission lines and the nearby Eskom substation. Three alternative options have been proposed, with two minor variations on those, such that the options are: Option 1 and 1a; Option 2a and 2b and Option 3.

The archaeologists note that much work has been done in the area of the Augrabies Falls, with Early, Middle and Later Stone Age material represented in assemblages. The has also yielded numerous burials, predominantly burial cairns of Khoekhoen people from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Historically, the area was an important agricultural hub, and several water furrows and water wheels have been declared Provincial Heritage Sites.

The field survey identified numerous heritage resources in the study area, although time constraints limited the thoroughness of the survey. The majority of these features were identified as having low heritage significance, while others were accorded high significance or medium significance. Two LSA sites of low significance were recommended for mitigation, one was associated with organic material (WV2012/016 206) and the other (WV2012/035 L041) was possibly associated with a medium significance site (L042) nearby. The high





significance sites included three gravesites. One of these consisted of three burial cairns (WV2001/002 118); another of approximately 74 graves (MB2001/010 133-139), apparently of recent age (i.e. younger than 60 years); and one consisting of the grave of J.A. Niewoudt, dated 1921 (WV2001/018 201). Eight further stone features were identified as possible graves. The only other site rated as having high significance consisted of a Later Stone Age site on the banks of the river comprising pottery, ostrich eggshell and stone artefacts, associated with possible deposit. The 17 sites of medium significance include a variety of MSA and LSA sites and scatters. Many of these sites were associated with ashy deposits that might indicate the presence of hearths. While several historic settlements had occurred within the area, these were all demolished during the military use of the land.

The most sensitive sites are those located near to the river and consist of small pastoralist campsites, and these would be most disturbed by the proposed Option 1. Options 2a and 2b will affect two of the historical settlements and LSA sites, which would need mitigation, however Option 2a is the preferred option. Option 3 is the furthest from the waterfall and will involve the greatest disturbance of the historic settlements and general landscape features.

As the proposed development area is underlain by the igneous rocks of the Namaqua-Natal Metamorphic Sequence, it is unlikely that the proposed development will impact on significant palaeontological heritage resources. However, it is possible that isolated fossils may occur trapped in the silt deposits of the Orange River floodplains. A watching brief for fossils should be included in the EMP.

Case Decision:

SAHRA supports the recommendations of the authors and requests that:

- A final walk-down should be undertaken of the study area once the final layout, alignments and development corridors have been established. The results of this walk down should be reported on and this report should be submitted to SAHRA for comment before any development can proceed.
- The SAHRA Burial Grounds and Graves Unit requests that a ground survey of the area is done to verify the number of graves that are present. Once the graves are clearly identified, they should be restored where these are dilapidated, protected and conserved. For this purpose, a proper fence must be built around them including entry gates to allow access. The fence must be placed 2 meters away from the perimeter of the graves. No development is allowed within 15 meters from the fence line surrounding the graves. A Conservation Management Plan must be drafted and included as part of the continued management and conservation of the graves as according to the act. Should it not be possible to amend plans and protect the graves, the applicant must contact the SAHRA Burial Graves and Grounds Unit to establish the way to proceed.

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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South African Heritage Resources Agency

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ADMIN:

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/126001>
(DEA, Ref: RVM 1: DEA Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/1/681; NEAS Ref: DEA/EIA/0001403/2012;)

