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CK 2006/014630/23 VAT NO.: 4360226270

A DESKTOP HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE ESKOM KOMATI POWER STATION SOLAR PV ESIA MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

For:

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REPORT: APAC022/51

Project Number: 41103965

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June 2022

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SUMMARY

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by WSP Group Africa (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the Komati Solar PV and BESS Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). As part of this a Desktop-based assessment for inclusion in a Preliminary ESIA Report was requested. A Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) forms part of the study and will be presented in a separate report. The Komati Power Station is situated about 37km from Middelburg, 43km from Bethal and 40km from Witbank, via Vandyksdrift in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

Background research indicates that there are several cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, but no known ones in the specific study area. This report discusses the results of the background research and provides recommendations on the way forward at the end.

From a Cultural Heritage point of view it is recommended that the proposed Solar electricity generating facility and associated infrastructure as part of Eskom's repurposing program for the Komati Power Station be allowed to continue, taking into consideration the recommendations put forward at the end.

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1. INTRODUCTION

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by WSP Group Africa (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the Komati Solar PV and BESS Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). As part of this a Desktop-based assessment for inclusion in a Preliminary ESIA Report was requested. A Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) forms part of the study and will be presented in a separate report. The Komati Power Station is situated about 37km from Middelburg, 43km from Bethal and 40km from Witbank, via Vandyksdrift in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

Background research indicates that there are several cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, but no known ones in the specific study area.

The client indicated the location and boundaries of the study area and the assessment concentrated on this portion.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for the study was to:

- 1. Identify all objects, sites, occurrences and structures of an archaeological or historical nature (cultural heritage sites) located on the portion of land that will be impacted upon by the proposed development;
- 2. Assess the significance of the cultural resources in terms of their archaeological, historical, scientific, social, religious, aesthetic and tourism value;
- 3. Describe the possible impact of the proposed development on these cultural remains, according to a standard set of conventions;
- 4. Propose suitable mitigation measures to minimize possible negative impacts on the cultural resources;
- 5. Review applicable legislative requirements;

It should be noted that No Field-Based Assessment was conducted as part of this Appointment and that the results and recommendations made in this report are based on the scrutiny of previous research and assessments in the area and aerial images of the study area.

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two Acts. These are the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998).

3.1. The National Heritage Resources Act

According to the Act the following is protected as cultural heritage resources:

- a. Archaeological artifacts, structures and sites older than 100 years
- b. Ethnographic art objects (e.g. prehistoric rock art) and ethnography
- c. Objects of decorative and visual arts
- d. Military objects, structures and sites older than 75 years
- e. Historical objects, structures and sites older than 60 years
- f. Proclaimed heritage sites
- g. Grave yards and graves older than 60 years
- h. Meteorites and fossils
- i. Objects, structures and sites of scientific or technological value.

The National Estate includes the following:

- a. Places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance
- b. Places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage
- c. Historical settlements and townscapes
- d. Landscapes and features of cultural significance
- e. Geological sites of scientific or cultural importance
- f. Sites of Archaeological and paleontological importance
- g. Graves and burial grounds
- h. Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery
- i. Movable objects (e.g. archaeological, paleontological, meteorites, geological specimens, military, ethnographic, books etc.)

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is the process to be followed in order to determine whether any heritage resources are located within the area to be developed as well as the possible impact of the proposed development thereon. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) only looks at archaeological resources. An HIA must be done under the following circumstances:

- a. The construction of a linear development (road, wall, power line, canal etc.) exceeding 300m in length
- b. The construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length
- Any development or other activity that will change the character of a site and exceed 5 000m² or involve three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof
- d. Re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000 m²
- e. Any other category provided for in the regulations of SAHRA or a provincial heritage authority

Structures

Section 34 (1) of the Act states that no person may demolish any structure or part thereof which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

A structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to land, and includes any fixtures, fittings and equipment associated therewith.

Alter means any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering or the decoration or any other means.

Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites

Section 35(4) of the Act deals with archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites and states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority (National or Provincial):

- a. destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or paleontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or paleontological material or object or any meteorite;
- c. trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or paleontological material or object, or any meteorite;
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or paleontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and paleontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites;
- e. alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years as protected.

The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). In order to demolish such a site or structure, a destruction permit from SAHRA will also be needed.

<u>Human remains</u>

Graves and burial grounds are divided into the following:

- a. ancestral graves
- b. royal graves and graves of traditional leaders

- c. graves of victims of conflict
- d. graves designated by the Minister
- e. historical graves and cemeteries
- f. human remains

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority:

- a. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position of otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;
- b. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or
 (b) any excavation, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

Human remains that are less than 60 years old are subject to provisions of the Human Tissue Act (Act 65 of 1983) and to local regulations. Exhumation of graves must conform to the standards set out in the **Ordinance on Excavations** (**Ordinance no. 12 of 1980**) (replacing the old Transvaal Ordinance no. 7 of 1925).

Permission must also be gained from the descendants (where known), the National Department of Health, Provincial Department of Health, Premier of the Province and local police. Furthermore, permission must also be gained from the various landowners (i.e. where the graves are located and where they are to be relocated to) before exhumation can take place.

Human remains can only be handled by a registered undertaker or an institution declared under the **Human Tissues Act (Act 65 of 1983 as amended)**.

3.2. The National Environmental Management Act

This Act states that a survey and evaluation of cultural resources must be done in areas where development projects, that will change the face of the environment, will be undertaken. The impact of the development on these resources should be determined and proposals for the mitigation thereof are made.

Environmental management should also take the cultural and social needs of people into account. Any disturbance of landscapes and sites that constitute the nation's cultural heritage should be avoided as far as possible and where this is not possible the disturbance should be minimized and remedied.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Survey of literature

A survey of available literature was undertaken in order to place the development area in an archaeological and historical context. The sources utilized in this regard are indicated in the bibliography.

4.2. Field survey

The field assessment section of the study is normally conducted according to generally accepted HIA practices and aimed at locating all possible objects, sites and features of heritage significance in the area of the proposed development. The location/position of all sites, features and objects is determined by means of a Global Positioning System (GPS) where possible, while detail photographs are also taken where needed.

No field work was undertaken as part of this assessment.

4.3. Oral histories

People from local communities are sometimes interviewed in order to obtain information relating to the surveyed area. It needs to be stated that this is not applicable under all circumstances. When applicable, the information is included in the text and referred to in the bibliography.

4.4. Documentation

All sites, objects, features and structures identified are documented according to a general set of minimum standards. Co-ordinates of individual localities are determined by means of the Global Positioning System (GPS). The information is added to the description in order to facilitate the identification of each locality.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA & PROJECT

The Komati Power Station is situated about 37km from Middelburg, 43km from Bethal and 40km from Witbank (eMalahleni), via Vandyksdrift in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The station has a total of 9 units, five 100MW units on the east (Units 1 to 5) and four 125 MW units on the west (Units 6 to 9), with a total installed capacity of 1000 MW. Its units operated on a simple Rankine Cycle without reheat and with a low superheat pressure, resulting in a lower thermodynamic efficiency (efficiency up to 27%). Komati Units are small and have a higher operating & maintenance cost per megawatt generated compared to modern newer stations. Komati Power Station will reach its end-of-life expectancy in September 2022 when Unit 9 will have reached its dead stop date (DSD). Units 1 to 8 have already reached its DSD.

Eskom is proposing the establishment of a solar electricity generating facility and associated infrastructure as part of its repurposing programme for Komati Power Station. The plan is to install 100MW of Solar Photovoltaics (PV) and 150MW of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The parcels of land in Komati for the proposed development are owned by Eskom.

The current assessments form part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the first phase of Komati Power Station repurposing programme, i.e. the installation of the Solar PV and BESS.

Based on aerial images (Google Earth) of the study and proposed development parcels it is clear that the area has been heavily impacted by development of the existing Power Station & its related infrastructure, residential & related developments as well as agricultural activities. The larger geographical area within which the study and proposed development areas are located have also been impacted by mining. The original natural and historical landscape has been severely altered through these activities and if any sites, features or material of cultural heritage (archaeological and/or historical) significance or origin were present here in the past it would have been extensively disturbed or destroyed as a result.

The topography of the study and development area is relatively flat and open, with no rocky outcrops, ridges or hills present.



Figure 1: General location of the Eskom Komati Power Station study area (Google Earth 2022).



Figure 2: Closer view of the study & proposed development areas. Note the heavily transformed and impacted nature of the specific and general area (Google Earth 2022).

6. DISCUSSION

The Stone Age is the period in human history when lithic (stone) material was mainly used to produce tools. In South Africa the Stone Age can be divided in basically into three periods. It is however important to note that dates are relative and only provide a broad framework for interpretation. A basic sequence for the South African Stone Age (Lombard et.al 2012) is as follows:

Earlier Stone Age (ESA) up to 2 million – more than 200 000 years ago Middle Stone Age (MSA) less than 300 000 – 20 000 years ago Later Stone Age (LSA) 40 000 years ago – 2000 years ago

It should also be noted that these dates are not a neat fit because of variability and overlapping ages between sites (Lombard et.al 2012: 125).

There are no known Stone Age sites in close proximity to the study area, although rock paintings (associated with the Later Stone Age) are known south of eMalahleni (Witbank) near the confluence of the Olifants River and Rietspruit, as well as a rock art site to the southeast of Middelburg (Bergh 1999:4-5). Heritage surveys have recorded few outstanding Stone Age sites, rock paintings and engravings in the Eastern Highveld - mainly as a result of limited extensive archaeological surveys. Stone tools have however been recorded around some of the pans which occur on the Eastern Highveld (Pistorius 2010:16). Some individual

Later Stone Age artifacts were identified in the larger area during a 2007 HIA for Goedgevonden Colliery, but the location of the site is not indicated (De Jong 2007: 19).

The possibility of finding Stone Age material in the study area is always a possibility. These would however more specifically be individual artifacts and small scatters of artifacts in open-air contexts if they are present.

The Iron Age is the name given to the period of human history when metal was mainly used to produce metal artifacts. In South Africa it can be divided in two separate phases (Bergh 1999: 96-98), namely:

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Early Iron Age (EIA) 200 – 1000 A.D
Late Iron Age (LIA) 1000 – 1850 A.D.
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Huffman (2007: xiii) however indicates that a Middle Iron Age should be included. His dates, which now seem to be widely accepted in archaeological circles, are:

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Early Iron Age (EIA) 250 – 900 A.D.
Middle Iron Age (MIA) 900 – 1300 A.D.
Late Iron Age (LIA) 1300 – 1840 A.D.
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No Early or Middle Iron Age sites are known to occur in the study area (Bergh 1999: 6-7). According to Pistorius the Eastern Highveld had probably not been occupied by Early Iron Age communities, but was occupied by Late Iron Age farming communities such as the Sotho, Swazi and Ndebele who established stone walled settlement complexes. Seemingly these sites are more common towards the eastern perimeters of the Eastern Highveld. Small, inconspicuous stone walled sites have been observed along the Olifants River but are an exception and not the rule (Pistorius 2010:16-17).

There are a fairly large number of Late Iron Age stone walled sites in the bigger geographical area that includes Lydenburg, Dullstroom, Machadodorp, Badplaas and Belfast (Bergh 1999: 6-7). Late Iron Age sites have been identified to the north and east of Middelburg in the vicinity of Belfast (Bergh 1999: 7). Some of these sites might be related to the so-called Marateng facies of the Urewe pottery tradition of the LIA, dating to between AD1650 and 1840 (Huffman 2007: 207). During the 19th century the Ndzundza Ndebele inhabited the land to the north of Middelburg, but it seems as if the area directly surrounding the town was largely uninhabited. The Ndebele of Mzilikazi did move through this area during the difagane which probably left it uninhabited for some time (Bergh 1999: 10-11).

The historical age started with the first recorded oral histories in the area. The first European people to move through this area were the party of the traveler Robert Schoon who passed through during 1836 (Bergh 1999: 13). Although the Voortrekkers moved across the Vaal River during the 1830's, it seems as if Europeans only settled here after 1850 (Bergh 1999: 14-15).

One historic event took place in the region. During the Anglo-Boer War, the British forces under Brigadier-General Beatson were attacked by the ZAR forces, led by Gen. Muller. More than 50 British soldiers were killed. Afterwards, Brigadier-Gen. Beatson accused the Australian forces of cowardice. They mutinied against him and some were arrested, court-martialled and sentenced to death. Fortunately, these sentences were later commuted to imprisonment. This battle took place on the farm Wilmansrust 47IS, just to the south of the power station. A monument to commemorate this event was erected on this farm, but during the early 1970s it was relocated to the town of Bethal. The site investigation for the power station was started in 1957, and the first unit was commissioned in 1961 and the last in 1966. In 1990 the station was completely mothballed (Van Schalkwyk 2007: 4). Construction of the power station began during 1961.

With no physical field assessments conducted in the study and proposed development areas it is difficult to determine without a doubt if any sites, features or material of cultural heritage origin or significance are located here and if there will be any impacts on such sites as a result of the planned development activities. Based on aerial images of the areas it is however clear that there has been substantial impacts on them (including the development of the existing Power Station and related infrastructure, agricultural residential and industrial) and if any sites, features or material of archaeological and/or historical origin and significance did exist in these specific areas in the past they would have been substantially disturbed or destroyed as a result.

It is evident from the desktop study that archaeological/historical sites and finds do occur in the larger geographical landscape within which the specific study area is located. Based on this it is always possible that open-air Stone Age sites could be found in the area, in the form of individual stone tools or small scatters of tools if present. The possibility of Iron Age sites in the area is highly unlikely with no rocky outcrops, ridges and hills present. The likelihood of recent historical sites and features being present in the area is also low, although this cannot be excluded. If any are present it would most likely be remnants of homesteads and unknown/unmarked graves. During a 2007 Heritage Survey for the Komati Power Station Ash Dam Extension (on the farm Komati Power Station 58IS, a subdivision of the original farm Koornfontein 27IS), no Stone Age, Iron Age or recent historical sites, features or material were identified in the area (Van Schalkwyk 2007: 4).

The planned Solar PV facility development and related infrastructure (including the Battery Energy Storage System and overhead power lines) is located in already heavily disturbed areas and the likelihood of any cultural heritage sites or features being located here is very low. The often subterranean nature of archaeological and/historical sites and features should however always be taken into consideration and there is always a possibility of these occurring in an area earmarked for development. This could include unmarked or unknown graves or burials.



Figure 3: Closer view of a section of the study and development areas. The residential area of Komati is visible, as well as an airstrip, open and cleared open spaces and parts of the existing Power Station infrastructure. The areas in green are for the Solar PV facility, red for the BESS and purple lines the overhead lines (Google Earth 2022).



Figure 4: Another section of the area with one of the alternative areas for the Solar PV facility in the green polygon and sections of the powerlines in purple shown. The agricultural fields in the area as well as the impacts of activities associated with the Komati Power Station is evident (Google Earth 2022).



Figure 5: Closer view of the Komati Power Station area with sections of the powerlines in purple and the BESS areas in red shown. The heavily disturbed nature of the area is clear (Google Earth 2022).

Based on the desktop research there is therefore a very low likelihood of any significant sites, features or material of archaeological and/or historical origin or nature being present in the study and proposed development areas. The impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage resources will therefore be very low.

With no fieldwork as yet undertaken there is always a possibility that some previously unknown heritage resources could be located in the area, even though previous studies did not identify any. The often subterranean nature of archaeological and/historical sites and features should also always be taken into consideration. This could include unmarked or unknown graves or burials.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by WSP Group Africa (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the Komati Solar PV and BESS Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). As part of this a Desktop-based assessment for inclusion in a Preliminary ESIA Report was requested. A Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) forms part of the study and will be presented in a separate report.

The Komati Power Station is situated about 37km from Middelburg, 43km from Bethal and 40km from Witbank, via Vandyksdrift in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

Background research indicates that there are several cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, but no known ones in the specific study area.

No physical field assessments have been conducted in the study and proposed development areas yet and it is therefore difficult to determine without a doubt if any sites, features or material of cultural heritage origin or significance are located here and if there will be any impacts on them as a result of the planned development activities. Aerial images however clearly show the substantial impacts of past developments on the study area and if any sites, features or material of archaeological and/or historical origin and significance did exist here in the past it would have been substantially disturbed or destroyed as a result.

The desktop study does show that archaeological/historical sites and finds occur in the larger geographical landscape within which the specific study area is located. During a 2007 Heritage Survey for the Komati Power Station Ash Dam Extension (on the farm Komati Power Station 58IS, a subdivision of the original farm Koornfontein 27IS), no Stone Age, Iron Age or recent historical sites, features or material were however identified in the area.

There is a very low likelihood of any significant sites, features or material of archaeological and/or historical origin or nature being present in the study and proposed development areas. The impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage resources will therefore be very low. However, with no fieldwork as yet undertaken in the areas, there is a possibility that some previously unknown heritage resources could be located in the area, even though previous studies did not identify any.

It is recommended that a site visit to the proposed development areas be undertaken to ensure that no cultural heritage sites, features or material exist here, and that might be negatively impacted by the proposed development actions before the development commences.

The often subterranean nature of archaeological and/historical sites and features should also always be taken into consideration. This could include unmarked or unknown graves or burials. Should any be exposed during any development activities a Specialist should then be called in to investigate and provide recommendations on the way forward in terms of any required mitigation measures.

8. REFERENCES

General and closer views of Study & Proposed Development Area: Google Earth 2022.

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APPENDIX A: DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Site: A large place with extensive structures and related cultural objects. It can also be a large assemblage of cultural artifacts, found on a single location.

Structure: A permanent building found in isolation or which forms a site in conjunction with other structures.

Feature: A coincidental find of movable cultural objects.

Object: Artifact (cultural object).

(Also see Knudson 1978: 20).

APPENDIX B: DEFINITION/ STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Historic value: Important in the community or pattern of history or has an association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in history.

Aesthetic value: Important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.

Scientific value: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of natural or cultural history or is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement of a particular period

Social value: Have a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Rarity: Does it possess uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of natural or cultural heritage.

Representivity: Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of natural or cultural places or object or a range of landscapes or environments characteristic of its class or of human activities (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique) in the environment of the nation, province region or locality.

APPENDIX C: SIGNIFICANCE AND FIELD RATING:

Cultural significance:

- Low: A cultural object being found out of context, not being part of a site or without any related feature/structure in its surroundings.
- Medium: Any site, structure or feature being regarded less important due to a number of factors, such as date and frequency. Also any important object found out of context.
- High: Any site, structure or feature regarded as important because of its age or uniqueness. Graves are always categorized as of a high importance. Also any important object found within a specific context.

Heritage significance:

- Grade I: Heritage resources with exceptional qualities to the extent that they are of national significance
- Grade II: Heritage resources with qualities giving it provincial or regional importance although it may form part of the national estate
- Grade III: Other heritage resources of local importance and therefore worthy of conservation

Field ratings:

- i. National Grade I significance: should be managed as part of the national estate
- ii. Provincial Grade II significance: should be managed as part of the provincial estate
- iii. Local Grade IIIA: should be included in the heritage register and not be mitigated (high significance)
- iv. Local Grade IIIB: should be included in the heritage register and may be mitigated (high/medium significance)
- v. General protection A (IV A): site should be mitigated before destruction (high/medium significance)
- vi. General protection B (IV B): site should be recorded before destruction (medium significance)
- vii. General protection C (IV C): phase 1 is seen as sufficient recording and it may be demolished (low significance)

APPENDIX D: PROTECTION OF HERITAGE RESOURCES:

Formal protection:

National heritage sites and Provincial heritage sites – Grade I and II

Protected areas - An area surrounding a heritage site

Provisional protection – For a maximum period of two years

Heritage registers – Listing Grades II and III

Heritage areas – Areas with more than one heritage site included

Heritage objects – e.g. Archaeological, palaeontological, meteorites, geological specimens, visual art, military, numismatic, books, etc.

General protection:

Objects protected by the laws of foreign states Structures – Older than 60 years Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites Burial grounds and graves Public monuments and memorials

APPENDIX E: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PHASES

- 1. Pre-assessment or Scoping Phase Establishment of the scope of the project and terms of reference.
- 2. Baseline Assessment Establishment of a broad framework of the potential heritage of an area.
- 3. Phase I Impact Assessment Identifying sites, assess their significance, make comments on the impact of the development and makes recommendations for mitigation or conservation.
- 4. Letter of recommendation for exemption If there is no likelihood that any sites will be impacted.
- 5. Phase II Mitigation or Rescue Planning for the protection of significant sites or sampling through excavation or collection (after receiving a permit) of sites that may be lost.
- 6. Phase III Management Plan For rare cases where sites are so important that development cannot be allowed.