

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

submitted in terms of section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act

prepared for

NADESON Consulting Services

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vidamemoria heritage consultant

3rd Floor · Guarantee House · 37 Burg Street · Greenmarket Square

P O Box 50605 Waterfront · 8002 · Cape Town

021 424 4242 (8432) cell: 082 330 4066 · quahnita@vidamemoria.co.za

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DR 01664 Eden

Vanwyksdorp – Eden District Municipality, Western Cape

Executive summary

Nadeson Consulting Services appointed *vidamemoria* to conduct a heritage impact assessment for expansion of an existing borrow pit located along DR01664 approximately 12.75 west of Vanwyksdorp in Eden District Municipality, Western Cape. *vidamemoria* appointed Dr John Almond (Natura Viva CC) to conduct necessary palaeontological specialist study (dated March 2013). Heritage impact assessment is submitted for comment in terms of Section 38(8) of the NHRAct as a component of an Environmental Management Programme (EMProg in terms of Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 49 of 2008) to be submitted to the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR).

The Upper Bokkeveld sediments in the study area are highly folded and cleaved and palaeontological sensitivity is correspondingly very low. The overlying semi-consolidated colluvial and alluvial gravels are apparently unfossiliferous. Proposed intervention would not result in a detrimental heritage impact, yielding social and economic benefits without a negative impact on heritage resources. No further specialist palaeontological studies or mitigation is recommended and expansion be allowed to proceed.

1. Introduction

Nadeson Consulting Services on behalf of the WCPA: Department of Transport and Public Works appointed Quahnita Samie (*vidamemoria*) to conduct a Notification of Intent to Develop (NID) application in terms of Section 38(1) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) **to expand an existing borrow pit along DR 01664 near Vanwyksdorp**, Eden District Municipality. NID dated 25 June 2012 was submitted to Heritage Western Cape (HWC) for consideration. Response dated 8 August 2012 (**case ref 12072620**) requested 'a heritage impact assessment consisting of a palaeontological study' (Refer Annexure A). *vidamemoria* appointed Dr John Almond (Natura Viva CC) to conduct the necessary palaeontological specialist study (dated March 2013) as incorporated within this assessment.

The proposed action triggers Section 38(1) (c)(a) activity that will change the character of a site exceeding 5 000 m². This assessment report is submitted for comment in terms of Section 38(8) of the NHRAct as a component of an Environmental Management Programme (EMProg) in terms of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (49 of 2008) to be submitted to the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR). Notification as previously submitted to HWC (dated 31 May 2011) and response (dated 20 June 2011) confirmed the approach to be undertaken in submitting borrow pit notifications to HWC.

Structure of assessment

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Site location and description

It is proposed to expand an existing borrow pit DR01664/11.8/0.2L for road material situated approximately 13 km west of Vanwyksdorp and 30 km south south east of Ladismith, Little Karoo Region, Western Cape. Material is to be extracted from an existing borrow pit along the unsealed road DR1664. This proposed borrow pit extension is located about 200 m to the north of DR1664 where it is aligned in an eastwest direction and traverses a flat pediment that is slightly raised above the level, and east of, an adjacent to the road reserve fence. Moose Valley 308/1is in private ownership of P Coetzee. Borrow pit co-ordinates are 33°44'35,96"S 21°19'22,77"E

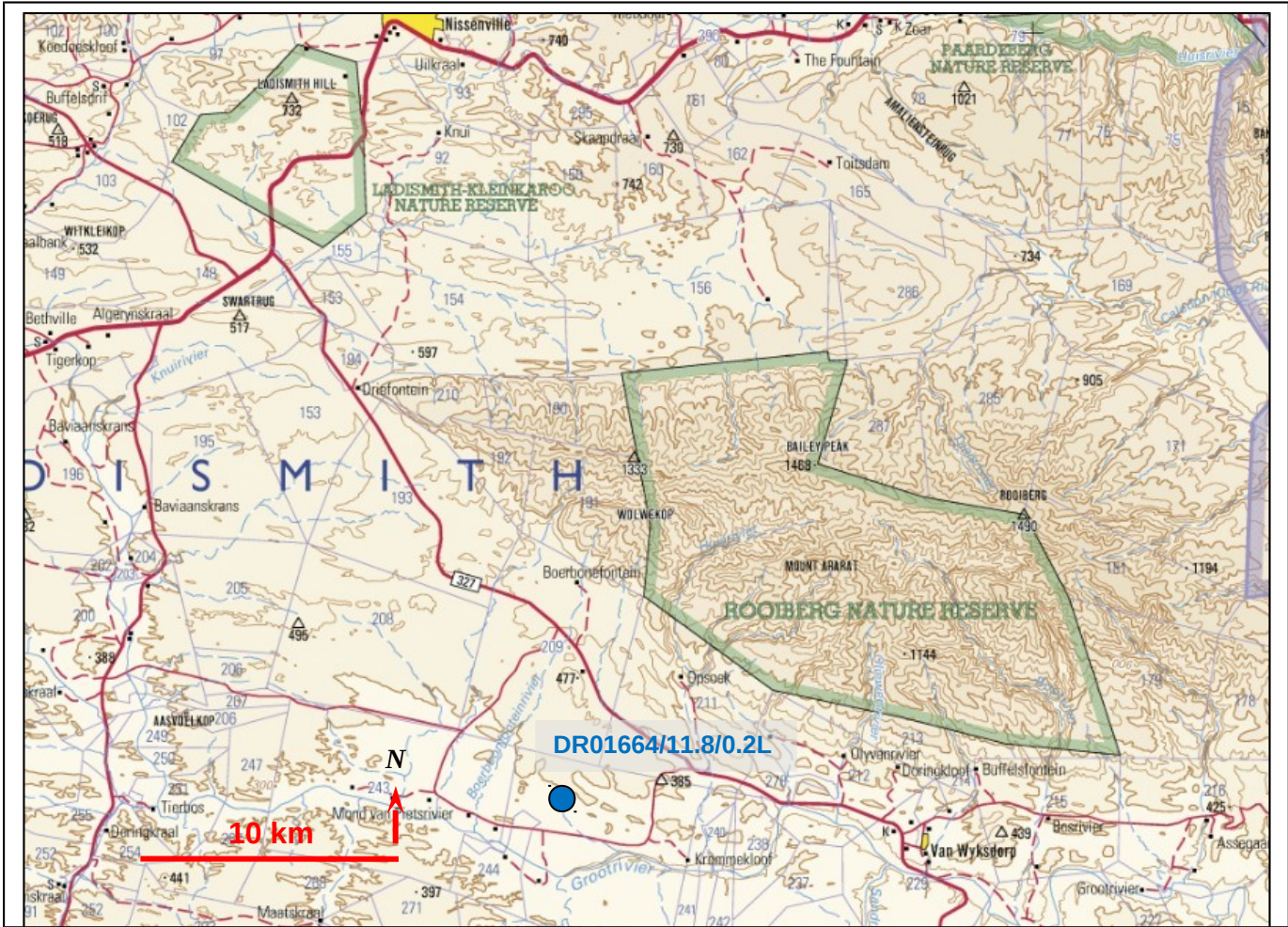


Figure 2: View westwards across existing pit (Almond 2013: 4)

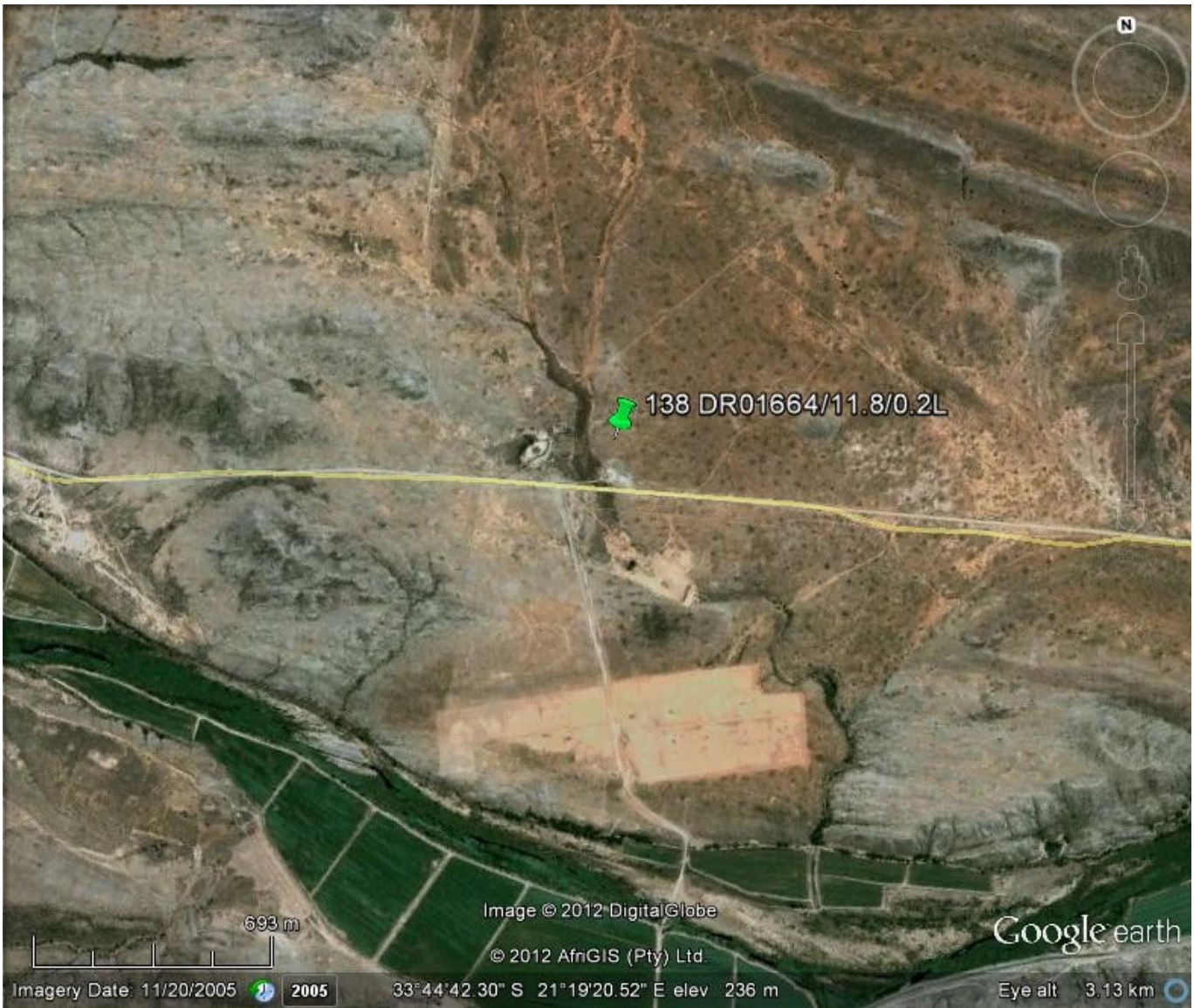


Figure 3: Aerial view of existing borrow pit location (Google earth image, February 2013)

Description of proposals

In terms of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act, all mining activities including extraction of material from borrow pits and quarries requires authorisation from the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR). Where the WCPA: Dept Transport and Public Works is undertaking the maintenance and / or upgrading of roads under its control, no application needs to be submitted for a mining right or permit, however, as per provisions of Section 106(2) of the MPRDAct, they are required to prepare and submit an EMProg to DMR for their approval prior to the extraction of any material from a proposed borrow pit or quarry. According to the MPRDAct, mineral resources are in the custodianship of the State, where WCPA would temporarily acquire the right to mine the borrow pits, subject to approval by the DMR.

For a gravel road to be able to carry traffic safely and effectively an upper layer of gravel known as a wearing course, which meets specific technical requirements, has to be placed on the prepared subgrade. With time, the wearing course is washed away by both traffic and the elements. This wearing course needs to be replaced in order to continue to deliver a safe and functional surface to road users. Implementation of repaving activities requires extraction of suitable material from identified material sources. During decommissioning, working areas are rehabilitated and revegetated. Material excavated from borrow pits located in the DMR along the DMR will be used for repaving to benefit road users in terms of road safety and user economy as well as to minimise maintenance related disruptions.

Summary of borrow pit	
Expropriation area	25 000 m ²
Borrow pit	25 000 m ²
Maximum depth	2.5 m
Material description	Shale of the Karies Formation (Traka Sub-group, Bokkeveld Group)
Proposed usage after rehabilitation	Stock watering
Volume of material to be sourced	35 000m ³

Trial pit investigations and sampling were conducted by Nadeson at four proposed borrow pits considered as potential sources of material. Three were however excluded from consideration due to environmental concerns and / or unsuitability of material for purpose of regravelling.

The mine plan outlining extent of borrow pit and mining is attached as Annexure B. Methodology for the preparation, operation and closure of borrow pit is outlined in Annexure C.

Eden District Municipality is to undertake work on behalf of the WCPA. Formal agreements are to be entered into between the landowner and the WCPA, with the municipality managing the site until decommissioning and closure. During decommissioning, the working area will be rehabilitated and revegetated as per the approach outlined in the mining plan. WCPA's liability for the site persists until such time as a Closure Certificate has been issued by the DMR.

Results of consultation

DMR has outlined requirements for public participation in terms of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (Act 28 of 2002) for exempted organs of state. This includes liaison with the landowner, notification of the immediate neighbours and either an on-site advertisement or advertisement in the local newspaper. The WCPA has indicated a commitment to developing and maintaining good relations with landowners and therefore landowners concerns are incorporated into the final agreement.

The public consultation process for this project has involved consultation with the landowners and neighbours, and the advertising of the proposed activity in the local newspaper.

No heritage related comments and / or concerns were received.

Requests / concerns of owner:

None noted

2. Heritage resources

Identification of heritage resources

Proposed site and immediate context do not fall within conservation or protected heritage areas, and is not located near to or visible from any protected heritage sites. The site does not fall within a historical settlement or townscape and does not contribute towards rural or natural landscape of cultural significance. The site is therefore not considered as an integral component of the cultural landscape.

Dr John Almond conducted a palaeontological field assessment and provided a report outlining geological context, palaeontological heritage and palaeontological sensitivity. The borrow pit is excavated into marginal marine sediments of the Karies Formation (Upper Bokkeveld Group). Important Middle Devonian fossil assemblages of fish, plants, non-marine bivalves and trace fossils have been recorded elsewhere from this stratigraphic unit. However, the Upper Bokkeveld sediments in the study area are highly folded and cleaved (Almond 2013: 1).

Extension of existing borrow pit and possible new resource area in undisturbed veld is unlikely to yield significant archaeology despite proximity to river channel and no further archaeological assessment is required (desktop assessment conducted by Dave Halkett ACO, June 2012). The site has no known historical, social, or spiritual significance. No built environment issues and / or cultural landscape issues have been identified. No further heritage resources were identified.

Heritage significance

Upper Bokkeveld sediments in the study area are highly folded and cleaved, so their palaeontological sensitivity is correspondingly very low (Almond, 2012: 5).

The context within which the site lies is identified as possessing low intrinsic heritage value. No heritage resources were identified within the immediate context of the site. The proposed development site is transformed and possesses no known historical, social or spiritual significance. No sensitive landscapes were identified. The site is therefore considered to possess a very low level of intrinsic heritage value.

Heritage indicators

Heritage indicators identified aim to ensure that significance would not be adversely impacted on by the proposed development. Indicators concern impact on the cultural landscape, identified heritage resources and visual impact.

No sensitive landscapes, archaeological or palaeontological material of significance were identified. Landscaping and rehabilitation of the site should commence as soon as advancing face and sufficient working/loading area moves away from an area that has been mined out.

3. Assessment of impacts

An assessment of the potential development impacts on significance is undertaken using relevant assessment criteria as well as response to indicators. Assessment of impacts on palaeontological significance has been provided as well as consideration of the cultural landscape and assessment of cumulative impacts.

Cultural landscape: Expansion of existing borrow pit would not result in a negative impact on the cultural landscape. The landscape within which the site lies possesses low intrinsic heritage value and no heritage resources were identified within the immediate context. The site and its immediate context are considered as being of low heritage significance. No heritage resources will be impacted and the overall status of the impact is considered as low.

Archaeological and palaeontological impact: No impact would occur as a result of expansion. The site has been sufficiently recorded and requires no further recording before borrow pit activity occurs.

Visual impact: Low intensity visual impact is limited to the immediate surroundings and will be limited to operational phase.

Cumulative impact: The proposed moderate intensity intervention lies within a disturbed context with degraded conditions. No new roads would have to be constructed as the borrow pit is accessed directly off main / divisional roads or via existing access tracks. The borrow pit and access tracks would be fenced for the duration of the mining activities. There will be no site buildings located at the borrow pit site. No long-term traffic increase will be experienced. Low impact is associated with impact of increased personnel and cumulative impacts on borrow pit footprint and surroundings.

Site rehabilitation: The intention is to recreate a shallow depression in which runoff collects for stock watering. Therefore, stockpiled topsoil should be carefully redistributed over cut slopes of worked out areas above the elevation of the drainage overflow, after the completion of any one phase of exploitation of the resources in this pit. The floor of the pit below the elevation of the drainage overflow does not require topsoiling because it will be drowned by collected run-off water.

Impact relative to sustainable social and economic benefits: The project will result in social and economic benefits for the local community in terms of service provision and employment opportunities.

The site is considered to possess a very low level of intrinsic heritage value and the overall status of the impact is considered as low.

4. Discussion

During the course of borrow pit excavations, operations should be planned in such a way that the amount of work that will be necessary for the finishing off of the borrow pit is reduced as far as possible. Indiscriminate excavation without due regard for the desired final shape of the borrow pit should not be permitted and should be rectified immediately. Timing of rehabilitation is important as rehabilitation of disturbed areas should ideally be programmed to occur as soon as practically possible following cessation of work in a specific area. The period between cessation of activities associated with mining of materials and the onset of rehabilitation for that area should ideally not exceed 1 month. Rehabilitation operations should ideally be conducted in parallel with extraction. Accordingly, progressive rehabilitation, in which depleted sections of a borrow pit are reclaimed while extraction is ongoing in other sections of the same pit is encouraged.

Site development, operation, mining and closure guidelines outlined with the Environmental Management Programme provides detailed guidance for the preparation, operation and decommissioning of the site. Rehabilitation of old and current working faces has been undertaken to mitigate visual impact to road users. Measures outlined should be adhered to in order to minimise potential negative impacts. It is recommended within the EMProg that an environmental control officer or suitable experienced engineer monitors the preparation, operational and decommissioning of the borrow pit so as to ensure that mitigation and rehabilitation measures are adhered to. Standard safety measures in place would include fencing, access control and fire management.

Upper Bokkeveld sediments in the study area are highly folded and cleaved, so their palaeontological sensitivity is correspondingly very low. The overlying semi-consolidated colluvial and alluvial gravels are apparently unfossiliferous. No further palaeontological heritage studies or mitigation are therefore recommended for this borrow pit project (Almond 2013: 5). Proposed intervention would yield positive benefits without a negative impact on heritage resources.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

1. expansion of exiting borrow pit be supported
2. comment be issued that proposed activity may proceed in terms of Section 38(8) of the NHRAct

References:

- Almond John E PhD (March 2013): *Palaeontological specialist study: field assessment & recommendation for exemption from further studies & mitigation*
- ASAPA Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (30 September 2009): *The issue of borrow pits being used in the aggregate and sand industry* accessed online
- Aurecon / Nadeson JV (July 2011): *Draft environmental management programme, summary report and mine plan*
- Galliers R M (July 2011): *Geotechnical investigations and geological strategic gravel pit summary report* for Aurecon South Africa
- Heritage Western Cape (July 2007): *Minimum Standards For Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment (Aia) Reports*
- vidamemoria (June 2012): *Notification of Intent to Develop*