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FIRST PHASE HERITAGE / ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE BORROW PITS ON THE R384 (MR768) ROAD, VOSBURG/CARNAVON, NORTHERN CAPE

INVESTIGATION

The borrow pits which will be effected by the proposed upgrading of the R384 (MR768) road between Vosburg and Carnavon, Northern Cape, was inspected on 1 March 2004. The investigation was done in the company of Dr Johan du Preez, from Cebo Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material to establish the potential impact on any cultural relics that might be present. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

LOCALITY

The proposed upgrading is planned along the R384 (MR768) gravel road between Vosburg and Carnavon, Northern Cape (3022DA). The vegetation of the area is typical Karoo and the soil cover varied between red sandy soils to gravel covered calcrete.

The different borrow pits are marked by the following GPS co-ordinates (Cape scale):

- BP1** Brandewynskuil 11 (Biesjesdam 88) (30°37'42"S. 022°43'46"E.
Altitude 1160m).
Located outside road reserve.
Weathered Lydianite flakes (some highly patinated)
Scattered LSA thumbnail scrapers (chert) with secondary retouch
(Fig.),

Calcrete granules with low shrub cover spread over wide area on surface.

- BP2** Hartebeesdam (Biesjesdam 88/8) (30°41'39"S. 022°38'08"E. Altitude 1215m).
Low shrub vegetation
Sandy soil
Scattered LSA flakes
Chunk of slag, reddish/brown colour, porous and bubbly
(30°41'37"S. 022°38'06"E. Altitude 1215m) (Fig.).
- BP3** Stilverlaat (Biesjesdam 88/3) (30°43'53"S. 022°33'56"E. Altitude 1253m).
Sandy soil with dense vegetation cover.
No cultural material visible on surface.
- BP4** Bronkhorstput 92 (30°47'04"S. 022°25'28"E. Altitude 1267m).
Existing borrow pit.
Highly disturbed.
Stony surface with shrubs.
- BP4B** Houdenbek 482/4 (between 107/8km mark)
30°46'32"S. 022°28'25"E. Altitude 1288m.
Sandy soil with shrub cover.
No cultural material on surface.
- BP6** (30°53'17"S. 022°18'24"E. Altitude 1252m).
Extention of existing borrow pit
Outside road reserve. Surface damaged.
- BP7** (30°54'05"S. 022°16'35"E. Altitude 1271m).
Outside road reserve. Surface damaged.
Sandy rocky surface with calcrete from sub-soil.
Scattered LSA material.

FINDS

Some of the pits had clearly been exploited during previous road building activities, resulting in the disturbance of the soil surface of the area.

Several of the proposed borrow pit sites produced archaeological material in the form of Later Stone Age flakes scattered on the surface. Some of these flakes were highly patinated, leaving vague traces of flaking and secondary retouch. The archaeological material also appears not to be of major regional importance.

The density of the finds is relatively sparse, seemingly out of context and lacks typological identification.

Because of the scattered nature of these flakes, the finds are not considered to be of great significance and are not important to be preserved.

No ceramics or other features of cultural or historical significance were recovered, and neither were traces of rock art or graffiti of historical significance found at any of the sites.

DISCUSSION

The existing gravel road consists of a well-built base, indicating rebuilding in more recent times. This confirms the soil disturbance visible at most of the existing borrow pits. No indication of graves or any archaeological material could be found in these cases.

MITIGATION

Every archaeological occurrence is unique and should be treated as a non-renewable commodity. All efforts should, therefore, be made to avoid any further disturbance or destruction.

Concerning the areas for the proposed developments, mitigation measures are not needed in any of the proposed cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No obvious reason could be found to delay the commencement of the work and it is recommended that the proposed development may proceed. Care should be taken to limit the disturbance of the area around the borrow pits.

It is stressed that in case of the discovery of any other stone tools and archaeological material of significance during the course of the work, all activities should temporarily be stopped in the specific area for inspection by specialists from the McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

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