

A PHASE ONE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED SITE OF A VODACOM BASE STATION AND POWERLINE AT BAKEN MINE, RICHTERSVELD

Prepared for

SRK Consulting.

October 1999



Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) was requested to provide information about the presence of archaeological resources at both the site of the proposed base station as well as along the route of the necessary powerline. In my initial response I had indicated that although the ACO has undertaken research in the area, we had no precise information on the location where these developments would take place. As communication equipment was already present on the summit (and had probably already resulted in disturbance), it was felt that the powerline route was most in need of investigation.

Co-incidentally, the ACO was going to be in the Richtersveld during the period 29.09.99 – 06.10.99 and it was suggested that a short investigation of the site could be undertaken at relatively minor cost to be absolutely sure if cultural resources were present or not. The location of the site is shown in Figure 1 and the approximate route of the powerline is shown in Plate 1.

2. METHODOLOGY

As the site lies within the security area of the Transhex diamond mine at Koeskop, fieldwork was conducted under escort of Gray Security. After driving to the site of the base station, the summit was inspected for archaeological material after which the route of the powerline was searched on foot.

2.1 Limitations

No precise plan of the powerline route could be supplied prior to the fieldwork. A photograph (Photo 5) in the scoping document has the approximate route superimposed and this was adequate for the purposes of the investigation. Given the nature of the archaeological occurrence, this is not seen as a major limitation on the conclusions of the study.

3. FINDINGS

A ubiquitous scatter of stone artefactual material is to be found on the summit of the hill as well as along the powerline route. No individual sites could be defined. The form of the artefacts suggests that they could be classified as waste produced during the production of larger tools. The material is probably from the Middle Stone Age (>45 000 yrs BP) but some Early Stone Age material (>200 000 yrs BP) is probably present as well.

The material is largely on vein quartz, which is super abundant on, and around the summit, with smaller amounts of fine grained siliceous materials also being represented. These may either have been found as inclusions in local strata or have been brought from the Orange River gravels to be worked at this location.

All material was located on the surface as none of the rockshelters that occur on the slope are of a size capable of accommodating human activity. As a result of the exposed nature of the slopes and summit, no organic materials have survived.

The lack of dolomite rocks in the study area means that no engravings would ever have existed here.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The nature of the archaeological occurrence would not greatly enhance our knowledge of early settlement behaviour if studied in more detail. The observation of material at this elevation on the landscape bears out similar observations made at other locations on both the South African and Namibian sides of the Orange River.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

No further action is necessary to mitigate the effects of the development of the base station or any associated infrastructure.

6. PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Fieldwork and report

Dave Halkett

