

Archaeological Impact Assessment

Title: Proposed Stilbaai-West 66 kV Line and 66/11 kV Substation.

Proposed construction by the Hessequa Municipality of an approximately 8 km power line linking a new substation at Stilbaai-West with an existing Eskom substation at Melkhoutfontein within the Hessequa Municipality.

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Commissioned by

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Municipal Jurisdiction & Developer

Hessequa Municipality, Still Bay.

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FIG. 1. Location of the proposed power line in relation to the town of Still Bay

Executive Summary

A survey for archaeological and palaeontological resources along the proposed routes for new 8 km power line at Still Bay showed no results. It is unlikely any resources will be impacted by this proposed development. A recommendation is made that, where the line crosses the church property of Melkhoutfontein with its rustic cottages, wooden rather than metal structures are used to carry the line.

Background Information

The growth of the resort town of Still Bay has prompted the Hessequa Municipality to undertake this project – the proposed construction of a new substation at Still Bay West and a power line linking this to an existing Stilbaai Eskom substation at Melkhoutfontein. The length of the line will be some 8 km mainly over farmland and spanning the river.

Three possible routes for the line are shown on Fig. 2. Options 1 & 2 cover much the same ground and Option 3 is longer. Of the three routes taking into account the many factors that affect the feasibility of construction Option 2 is the surveyor's preferred route.



Fig. 2. Three options proposed by the land surveyor. Option 2 is the preferred route.

Archaeological Background

The pioneering research of Heese (1933 Anns. Univ. Stellenbosch Vol. 11:1-65) drew attention to the archaeology of the Still Bay area. These included shell middens and fish

traps along the coast and Stone Age artefacts in the deflated dunes, now vegetated, west of the town at Blombos. More recently Henshilwood (d'Errico & Henshilwood 2007, *Journal of Human Evolution* 52: 142-162) has concentrated research on a coastal cave at Blombos with important Middle Stone Age finds. The range of archaeological resources in the area is typical of the Cape coastal zone.

Description of the property

The site of the proposed new substation at Still Bay West is on the edge of urban development. From there the routes run over rolling farmland blanketed by sands before crossing the incised river and rising to the level of the Stilbaai Eskom substation on Melkhoutfontein.

Methodology

Two days were spent in surveying the property in the company of Mr Tom Bezuidenhout who has been responsible for designing the route options. The routes crossing a number of different properties restricted access. Where necessary the strategy adopted was to survey different sections of the routes that gave equivalent perspectives of the terrain to be crossed. Particular attention was paid to the section of the routes that could impact on cottages on 'kerkgrond' and the 'monument huis'.

Observations and Results

The sand cover reduces visibility in the area. However, diligent examination of all exposures along the routes failed to reveal any archaeological or palaeontological remains.

Attention was paid to the possible impact of the routes where they crossed the river and connected with the Stilbaai Eskom substation. There is a Provincial Monument, Huis 31 Kerkgrond, Melkhoutfontein, on the road, R305 (Fig.3 & Fig. 4). The Simon van der Stel Foundation has been involved in the restoration of this cottage and it is a photogenic example of vernacular architecture. The preferred route from the substation is designed to cross the R305 to the south of the cottage to minimise any visual impact. The route from there to the river crossing passes close to two other cottages also on property owned by Anglican Church. All these cottages are served with power lines carried on wooden poles and it is important in terms of conformity and aesthetics that the new line in this section is also carried on wooden structures. Any steel structures in this rustic setting would be unacceptably intrusive.

Sources of Risk and Statement of Significance

The risk of the standards carrying the line impacting on any cultural resources is considered low.

The significance is rated as low.

Recommended Mitigations

It is recommended that wooden standards be used to carry the line from the Stilbaai Eskom substation across the river to minimise the visual impact on the rustic setting.

Further it is recommended that should any excavations by chance uncover buried palaeontological or archaeological materials including human remains that Heritage Western Cape is notified (Senior Administrator, Heritage Resource Management Services, HWC, Private Bag X9067, Cape Town 8000, Tel:021 483 9743, Fax:021 483 9842, Ltyali@pwc.gov.za). Features like burials for example can occur in unpredictable locations.



Fig. 3. The ‘monument huis’, Huis 31, Kerkgrond, Melkhoutfontein on the R305



Fig. 4. Wooden poles carry power to ‘Huis 31’ and other cottages. The main Eskom line along the R305 in the foreground is also on wooden standards.