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ESKOM: BULWER-NCWADI TRANSMISSION LINE (PHASE 1)

Eskom intends to build a transmission line from the Bulwer to Ariadne substations. The surveying in of the transmission line is complete. All interested and affected parties have been consulted for the phase 3 (Bulwer to Ncwadi) aspect, and their objections and concerns have been reviewed. The Institute for Cultural Resource Management (ICRM) was approached to an archaeological survey when they had raised concerns regarding the impact on potential archaeological sites.

The archaeological survey of the transmission route was conducted driving along the route and locating areas of archaeological sensitivity. Areas of housing development and afforestation were excluded from the survey since any potential archaeological sites would already have been impacted upon.

All archaeological and historical sites are protected by the national Monuments Act of 1969 (with Amendments). This Act makes it an offence to damage, alter, remove and disturb these sites without permission from the National Monuments Council. Permission is granted by means of a permit after appropriate archaeological or historical mitigation has been undertaken.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

During the course of the survey three archaeological sites were located. However, only one of these sites may be in the direct path of the transmission line.

Site 1:

The first site was a stone structure and possibly a cattle byre (kraal). This site was located near the village of Mnyamana. No artefacts were visible on the surface.

Site 2:

The second archaeological site was located on the hilltop in the vicinity of a farmhouse, southwest where the Elands River meets the Umkommas River. This site consisted of a Middle Stone Age (MSA) scatter that has eroded from a nearby hill. Several MSA stone implements were observed.

Site 3:

The third archaeological site is located between the villages of Butu and Mnyamana. The site will be impacted upon if an electricity pylon was erected on or near it. This site is a stone structure similar to the one described above. This cattle byre differed in that there was a dividing wall in the middle of the structure. On the surface two artefacts were observed. The first artefact was a rifle cartridge without an inscription on its base. The second artefact was a pot sherd with a red burnish.

Several other stone structures were observed in the vicinity of the third site. All of these consisted of stone walling either for household purposes or for cattle and sheep or goat byres. These sites were concentrated on the opposite side of a nearby river, however, several were observed near site 3.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Site 1:

While the erection of an electricity pylon on this site is unlikely, it should be recorded. The site is architecturally similar to those recorded at site 3 and these may be both spatially and temporally related.

Site 2:

This site is not significant since the stone implements were in a secondary context and are unlikely to yield valuable archaeological information. Site 2 is not in the direct path of the transmission line and no further mitigation would be required.

Site 3:

Site 3 appears to be part of a complex of archaeological sites located in this valley. Insufficient artefacts were located to rate the full importance of this complex. However, These sites may date to the eighteenth and/or nineteenth century, since pots with a red burnish are common to this time period. If this site indeed dates to this time period, then it may be one of the few stone wall complexes dating to this period in KwaZulu-Natal .

If an electricity pylon is erected on this site, then it would need to be recorded in detail. This recording would include the surveying in of the structure in relation to the landscape as well as determining the full extent of possible archaeological deposit. Furthermore, Eskom should ensure that other stone wall structures along the transmission line are not impacted upon, unless they have been appropriately recorded. Ant impact upon these sites would require a permit from the National Monuments Council.

CONCLUSION

An archaeological survey of the phase three part of the Ariadne-Bulwer transmission line was undertaken be the ICRM. The survey recorded three archaeological sites of which one may be impacted upon by the transmission line. This site may be archaeologically significant and the site would require some form of mitigation if it is to be altered in any way. Mitigation involves surveying the structure and determining the extent of potential archaeological deposit. A permit from the National Monuments Council would be required to alter this site.