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**FIRST PHASE: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT SURVEY
OF THE HOLE-IN-THE-WALL RIDGE DEVELOPMENT, WILD
COAST, EASTERN CAPE**

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Introduction

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 makes provision for a compulsory HIA when an area exceeding 5000 m² is being developed (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: page 55). This is to determine if the area contains heritage sites and to take the necessary steps to ensure that they are not damaged or destroyed during development. Dr Webley of the Albany Museum was approached by Mr Bosman and requested to undertake a first phase HIA assessment survey of the ridge development at Hole-in-the-Wall on the Wild Coast.

Terms of Reference

Dr Webley was verbally requested by Mr Bosman to survey the area proposed for a hotel development at Hole-in-the-Wall. She was forwarded a report compiled by Coastal and Environmental Services entitled: 'Ecological Economic and Social viability analysis of proposed Projects – Volume 3' relating to 'Proposed Coffee Bay and Hole-in-the-Wall Developments'.

This report tables a number of proposed developments. Inter alia:

1. Three different localities for a hotel on the ridge overlooking the Hole-in-the-Wall
2. Camp site and chalet development within the coastal forest directly in front of the Hole in the wall rock.
3. Hlungulwana Traditional Village.
4. Coffee Bay campsite upgrade.
5. Maphuzi small craft development.

However, Dr Webley was only asked to look at the first development. An attempt was made to visit the locality of the proposed traditional village at Hlungulwana, between Hole-in-the-Wall and Coffee Bay (see below).

Archaeology of the Wild Coast

Derricourt (1977) visited a number of areas along the former Transkei coast and reported on archaeological sites. He described:

Mbolompo Point, which is about 10km south of Hole-in-the-Wall. A large collection of material, including lydianite and shale flakes, pottery and shell was reportedly collected by Ms Courtney-Latimer (previously of the East London) museum from this large midden (see Terminology). The pottery has not yet been examined but includes decorated ware comprising herringbone design. This midden may relate to Iron Age Farmers or Khoisan groups who lived along the coast.

Mnewasa north, located just north of Mbolompo, is also a midden on the side of a stream. This is a large midden including stone artifacts, marine shell (limpets) and faunal remains including blue duiker.

Hole-in-the-Wall is reported to have at least two shell middens. Both are located 'southwest of the camp site'. It is not clear which camp site this refers to and people who have been visiting the area for the last 30 years would have to be consulted to determine the locations of these sites. It is possible that they may have already been destroyed.

The first midden is small and consists mainly of mussel shells. The second midden is large and more exposed; behind a wire fence' (Derricourt 1977:120). It contains a wide range of marine shell, including mussel, limpet and winkles. It also has a stone chip and some pottery fragments.

Lwandili, some 20 km north of Coffee Bay, is also reported to have archaeological remains including stone tools.

On a visit to the Ngabara Point (50km south of Hole-in-the-Wall) in October 2004, a total of six shell middens were found along a stretch of coast less than 1km in extent.

The number of archaeological sites listed above points to the importance of undertaking surveys along the Wild Coast before commencing with development. This area is rich in the heritage of Khoisan groups as well as those of the first black farmers (Early Iron Age). Only one archaeological site has ever been excavated on this coast.

Field Report: Hole-in-the-Wall Ridge Development

The ridge area (number 1 above) was visited on 11 April 2005. The original location for the hotel, on the ridge (locality 1) was not visited. This is because Mr Bosman indicated that it was unlikely that it would be chosen as a consequence of the report compiled by Coastal & Environmental Services (CES). This first locality is "too exposed for development and would result in significant visual intrusion" (page 33). The report had recommended an area slightly to the north-east called locality 2, which is situated in a small valley or depression. It seemed more likely, according to Mr Bosman that this area would be chosen. We also examined a third area (locality 3), which had been proposed by Mr Fielding (another environmental consultant) for the hotel development. See Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.9 of the Report prepared by CES for the Ridge Development.

Locality 2:

S 32°02'13,6"
E 29°06'23,8"



Locality 2: Valley with bean field in the distance.

The valley runs in a south west/north south direction and has a small stream running through the center. The entire area is covered in grassland and a few bush clumps. Development would clearly have to take place on the two slopes of the valley. The far site contained a small bean field which provided the only opportunity to examine soil. The soil is sandy with decomposing shale. The bean field showed no signs of any prehistoric occupation and the slopes of the valley too, did not appear to contain any shell middens. There is also an abandoned wooden structure on the opposite side of the valley and a soil cutting beneath this house was examined for any signs of prehistoric settlement. None was observed.

Locality 3:

S 32°02'13,4"
E 29°08'00,2"

This area comprises a grassy hillside immediately behind the local home-owners dwellings. There is only one small sandy hollow situated in the grass which probably relates to local people collecting soil for building purposes. This hollow was also examined for any prehistoric material including shells or stone tools. Nothing was observed and there are no raised areas on the slopes which could indicate prehistoric shell middens.



Locality 3: Overlooking home owners houses with sandy depression in foreground.

In my opinion, it is also unlikely that LSA shell middens would be located on this ridge because it is situated on a very steep and high cliff face above the sea.

Field Report: Hlunguwana Traditional Village

An attempt was made to visit this site on the 11 April but due to high rainfall the preceding day, the access road had become impassable. From the descriptions provided by CES and the photographs (Figure 7.2) in their report, this locality may contain shell middens. It is located immediately above a rocky shoreline, between high cliffs and contains a natural stream. It is proposed to build an upmarket accommodation and restaurant facilities. Prior to the construction of this village it is recommended that this area be surveyed for archaeological sites.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All archaeological sites are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb archaeological sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

Ridge Development

No archaeological sites were discovered during the survey of the ridge area overlooking Hole-in-the-Wall. However, it is possible that sites may be buried under the soil and grass surface. For this reason every care should be taken during the bulldozing of the area. Archaeological sites, including fossilized bone or human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

I would recommend that development of the ridge area can take place but that every care should be taken to avoid destroying archaeological sites which may be located beneath the soil surface. When leveling of the soil takes place, contractors should look for the following features:

1. Dense accumulations of marine shell – evidence of a prehistoric shell midden.
2. Concentrations of shell associated with pieces of bone, pottery and stone artifacts.
3. Concentrations of fossilized bone.
4. Concentrations of blue and white china, pieces of iron, coins, etc.
5. Human remains including burials.

Coastal Forest

Although I was not specifically requested to examine the coastal forest in front of the Hole in the Wall rock, it is noted that archaeological sites are reported in the Derricourt (1977) publication from the original Hole in the Wall campsite. The Report by Coastal and Environmental Services (CES) recommends that there should be no significant development in the coastal forest directly in front of the Hole in the Wall rock because of its sensitivity. I would support their proposal that this be declared a conservation area. This area was not surveyed but it seems more likely that prehistoric sites, such as shell middens, may be located in the forest area.

Traditional village at Hlungulwana

This area was inaccessible because of the roads. From descriptions of the site in the CES report, it would appear to be a likely area for shell middens. For this reason it is recommended that the area be surveyed before development takes place.

Finally, in their report CES propose that the Hole-in-the-Wall and surrounding forest conservation area should be put forward as a National Heritage Site. I would strongly support this proposal.

References

Coastal & Environmental Services. 2004. Ecological Economic and Social viability analysis of proposed projects. Volume 3.

Derricourt, R. 1977. Prehistoric Man in the Ciskei and Transkei. Cape Town: Struik.

Webley, L. October 2004. An unpublished report on an archaeological survey at Ngabara Point, Wild Coast, Eastern Cape.

Terminology

Shell Middens: the most common archaeological sites along the coast are open-air shell middens. A midden is a heap of shell which has accumulated as a result of the actions of people. These middens may measure anything between 1m and 20m in diameter. They consist primarily of shellfish. Generally there is a correlation between the shellfish on the midden and what is available on the rocks nearby. Middens may also contain bone remains such as seals, fish and a large variety of buck. Cultural remains may include stone tools, pottery, ostrich eggshell beads, shell and bone pendants, etc.

Khoisan: is a collective term relating to the Khoekhoen and San peoples who were settled in South Africa before the arrival of the Iron Age peoples and the first white settlers. The San were the original inhabitants of the region. They had a Stone Age technology and hunted game and gathered plant foods. The Khoekhoen settled in South Africa some 2000 years ago and were also herders of livestock.

Iron Age: refers to the first agriculturalists to settle in South Africa. They brought with them the ability to smelt iron, hence the term Iron Age. The earliest farmers (Early Iron Age) made extensive use of marine resources and many of the shell middens along the Wild Coast contain the remains of these peoples. These middens can be identified by the decorated pottery fragments they contain. They may also contain the bones of domesticated livestock.