

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 Umkomaas 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. Any 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 by 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.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE ARIADNE-BULWER TRANSMISSION:
CONSTRUCTION PHASE 2

Eskom intends to build a transmission line from the Bulwer to Ariadne substations. The transmission line route has been completed and interested and affected parties have been consulted. The Institute for Cultural Resource Management (ICRM) was approached to undertake an archaeological survey of this route after they had raised concerns regarding the impact of transmission lines on potential archaeological sites.

The archaeological survey of the transmission route was conducted by 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, historical and palaeontological 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. The permit is a legal document.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

One archaeological site was found along the Phase 2 route. This site was located near the boundaries of Baynesfield Estate and Mondi Forest near the top of a hill overlooking the river at the bottom of the valley. The site has been plotted with a GPS (S 29⁰ 43' 39"; E 30⁰ 13' 33") and the reading was taken in the centre of the main site. Since this is only a survey of potential sites no detailed recordings have been undertaken.

The site is approximately 100m wide and between 500m - 1000m long. It consists of several structures made from basalt, which is located near the outcrop at the top of the hill. These structures comprise the remains of stone walling, cattle and sheep/goat byres, houses, and stone terracing. There are several of these structures and they probably reflect the remains of a village. At least two large rectangular byres were observed. While no artefacts were observed, because of the dense ground vegetation, the site probably dates within the last 250 years

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The site is of high archaeological significance. Few settlements of this age, type or structure have been recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. Moreover the site probably consists of a whole village with most of its structures in a primary context, ie it is largely undisturbed. While a similar stone walled village was found near Butu, this village may not necessarily be related to that described for the Phase 1 report. The village near Butu had slightly different structures and upright basalt slabs in most of the larger byres.

Because of the significance of this site, I recommend that it is not disturbed in any manner. This means that transmission lines, especially the transmission towers, should not be placed within 50m of the outer perimeter of this site. The construction of a powerline through the site will have a negative impact in terms of the visual aspect as well as the loss of archaeological information.

If ESKOM intends to continue with its present location of the transmission line and servitudes along this route several mitigatory steps should be undertaken:

1. obtain a permit from the National Monuments Council - this is a legal necessity;
 2. map the site with a qualified archaeologist especially those areas that will be impacted upon - this should preferably occur in winter;
 3. allow an archaeologist to dig test pits in areas where transmission pylons will be placed before these holes are dug by ESKOM;
 4. ensure that an archaeologist is present when construction work begins near the site;
- and,

5. any stones, or walling, from the site and its immediate environment should not be used in the construction and erection of the pylons, or any other structures ESKOM may require.

I do however recommend that the transmission line and the servitudes are located below the site, and that the site is not impacted upon by any means.

CONCLUSIONS

The ICRM was approached to survey the potential route for the Phase 2 of the Ariadne-Bulwer line has been chosen. Only one archaeological site was observed along this route. The site is a consists of several stone structures that appear to be the remains of a village. This site is regarded as having high archaeological significance, and I recommended that ESKOM should either not impact upon this site, or undertake the proposed archaeological mitigation .