

BHP Billiton World Exploration Inc : Diamond Prospecting on properties north west of Postmasburg

DME NC 30/5/11/3/2/1 (459) EM; SAHRA 9/2/074/0001

Comment to BHP Billiton with regard to proposed prospecting by drilling.

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These preliminary comments are based on desktop assessment of the known archaeological resources of the region. While much of the surrounding region has yet to be examined from an archaeological viewpoint, certain areas have been investigated in great detail, particularly in the last quarter century. This is especially true of the Kathu area (Beaumont & Morris 1990; Beaumont 2004; Morris & Beaumont 2004), to the north of the properties indicated. This existing work suggests that sites of great significance may yet be brought to light in the region. Broadly speaking, the archaeological record of this region reflects the long span of human history from Earlier Stone Age times (more than one and a half million to about 270 000 years ago), through the Middle Stone Age (about 270 000 – 40 000 years ago), to the Later Stone Age (up to the protocolonial era). The last 2000 years was a period of increasing social complexity with the appearance of farming (herding and agriculture) alongside foraging, and of ceramic and metallurgical (Iron Age) technologies alongside an older trajectory of stone tool making. Of interest in this area is evidence of early mining of specularite, and sparking mineral that was used in cosmetic and ritual contexts from early times (Beaumont 1973). Rock art is known in the form of rock engravings, in some rescued ahead of mining at Sishen, Bruce and Beeshoek. The farm of Doornfontein, one of those included in your prospecting programme, contains the type site of a form of pottery from a specularite working described by Beaumont (Beaumont 1973; Beaumont & Boshier 1974).

Recommendation

It is noted that prospecting will take place by way of one to two 45 mm boreholes per farm, with no trenching or pitting, and no major road construction. It is recommended that a full Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment is not required at this stage. However care must be taken to avoid damaging any possible sites, particularly the Doornfontein specularite working which is a site with major regional significance.

In the event of any archaeological site being encountered an archaeologist should be alerted immediately.

Should work proceed beyond this preliminary prospecting (drilling) phase, it would be necessary to carry out a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment.

References

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- Beaumont, P. B. 2004. Archaeological sites in the Gamagara Municipal Area. Ms.
- Beaumont, P. B. & Boshier, A.K. 1974. Report on test excavations in a prehistoric pigment mine near Postmasburg, Northern Cape. *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 29: 41-59.
- Beaumont, P. B. & Morris, D. 1990. *Guide to archaeological sites in the Northern Cape*. Kimberley: McGregor Museum.
- Morris, D. & Beaumont, P. B. 2004. *Archaeology in the Northern Cape: some key sites*. Kimberley: McGregor Museum.