

Agency for Cultural Resource Management

Specialists in Archaeological Studies and Heritage Resource Management

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20 March, 2010

Att: Ms Jessica Christie
Hilland Associates
PO Box 590
George
6530

Dear Ms Christie,

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT – DESK TOP STUDY PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROBBERG VLEI BOARDWALK ERF 10306 PLETTENBERG BAY

1. Introduction

Heritage Western Cape (HWC) requested that an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) – Desk Top Study must be done for the proposed construction of a public boardwalk in the Robberg Vlei in Plettenberg Bay in the southern Cape (Figure 1). The applicant is Whale Rock Developments (Pty) Ltd who are also the registered property owner of Erf 10306. A NID (Notice of Intent to Develop) has been completed by Hilland Associates. The Agency for Cultural Resource Management (ACRM) has been requested to compile the desk top study on behalf of the applicant.

The proposed project comprises the construction of a ±150 m long, 2 m wide raised wooden boardwalk, which is to be located below Whale Rock Estate, an upmarket residential development situated in Plettenberg Bay (Figure 2). The boardwalk will cross a small portion of the Vlei in the north, and exit at the car park at Solar Beach. Limited excavation is envisaged, confined mainly to boardwalk support posts. Several bird hides and a public hiking trail around the edge of the vlei are also planned.

2. The study site

The proposed site (S 34° 05 30.94 E 23° 21 59.7 on map datum wgs 84) is located in Plettenberg Bay. The Robberg Vlei is a natural wetland which is surrounded by increasing residential development. The Vlei constitutes the largest freshwater Dune Slack wetland in the southern Cape. The wetland is currently zoned as Public Open Space. The portion of the vlei where the boardwalk is to be constructed is choked up with invasive alien vegetation.

3. Approach to the study

As requested by HWC, a desk top study has been done.

4. Results of the desk top study

Plettenberg Bay is well known for its rich archaeological heritage. The majority of sites documented so far occur on, or close to, the Robberg Nature Reserve, where more than 20 caves/shelters have been recorded (Kaplan 1993). This includes the well known Middle Stone Age site known as Nelson Bay Cave, which is also a declared National Monument.

In 2009, the archaeologist located several more cave sites with Middle Stone Age tools and potential MSA deposits in the steep coastal cliffs at Vyekraal, south of the Robberg Nature Reserve.

Diffuse scatters of Early Stone Age (ESA) as well as Middle Stone Age (MSA) tools have been recorded on the cliffs overlooking Robberg Beach (Kaplan 1993). MSA and ESA sites have been documented at Platbank, Uiteindelik, and Beacon Island, for example. Substantial Later Stone Age shell midden deposits have been documented on the rocky shore at the popular Lookout Beach, in Plettenberg Bay (Kaplan 2009).

A number of Archaeological Impact Assessments have also been done in Plettenberg Bay, between the Beacon Isle Hotel and Robberg Nature Reserve, mainly in response to increased residential development and demand for coastal property. These studies have been undertaken under the aegis of the National Heritage Resource Act (No. 25 of 1999).

Early Stone Age and Middle Stone Age implements were documented during a study for the proposed Whale Rock Estate and Phase 3 of the proposed Robberg Estate, residential developments (Kaplan 200a, b). Both properties overlook the Robberg Vlei.

Relatively large numbers of Middle Stone Age tools and some Early Stone Age tools were also documented during a study for the proposed Brackenridge development and Nature Reserve, on the Robberg Road (Kaplan 2001).

And recently, an Early Stone Age and Middle Stone Age quarry site has been documented on the Farm Brakkloof, behind Whale Rock Estate on the road to Robberg Nature Reserve (Kaplan 2010 in prep). Many tools have been counted, including handaxes and choppers, flakes, chunks and cores. Possible activity areas have also been identified.

In more recent times, this coastal area around Robberg Beach was the site of the first European settlement in South Africa, which in turn was the scene of early interactions between European and indigenous people. A large collection of oriental ceramics, metal fittings, as well as ships navigational instruments were discovered in the top of a sand dune adjacent to Robberg Estate (Hart & Halkett 1993). It was assumed at the time that the finds related to the camp of the survivors of the heavily laden Portuguese vessel the Sao Goncalo, which sank off Plettenberg Bay in 1630. Excavations at the site by Andy Smith (1986) located what appeared to be a workshop area, where iron was being smelted and forged. This led to the conclusion that the site was probably the remains of the Sao Gancalos' survivors' camp and workshop area (Smith 1986).

5. Impact statement

The impact of the proposed construction of a public boardwalk in the Robberg Vlei on archaeological remains is likely to be **low**, especially as construction will be limited to boardwalk support posts. It is also considered to be highly unlikely that any archaeological remains will be found during clearing of alien vegetation from the Vlei, or where the boardwalk exits the vlei at the car park at Solar Beach.

The proposed construction of the Robberg Vlei boardwalk should therefore be allowed to proceed as planned.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JK', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Kaplan

6 References

Hart, T. & Halkett, D. 1993. A Phase 1 archaeological assessment of portion 44 of the farm Brakkloof No. 443, Plettenberg Bay. Report prepared for Barry Dole Associates. Archaeology Contracts Office, University of Cape Town

Kaplan, J. 2010 (in prep). Archaeological Impact Assessment proposed development on Portion 59, 62 & 63 of the Farm Brakkloof No. 443 Plettenberg Bay. Report prepared for Calidris Development Management Services. Agency for Cultural Resource Management

Kaplan, J. 2009. Information compiled for Lookout Local Nature Reserve, Plettenberg Bay, including proposed Management Guidelines. Report prepared for Blue Pebble Environmental Agency. Agency for Cultural Resource Management.

Kaplan, J. 2000a. Archaeological study, portion 60 of Whale Rock Farm No. 443, Plettenberg Bay. Report prepared for Blue Dot Properties (Pty) Ltd.

Kaplan, J. 2000b. Archaeological study, Phase 2 and portion of portion 59 – Phase 3, Robberg Estate, Plettenberg Bay. Report prepared for Blue Dot Properties (Pty) Ltd

Kaplan, J. 1993. The state of archaeological information in the coastal zone between the Orange River and Ponto do Ouro, Report prepared for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Agency for Cultural Resource Management.

Smith, A.B. 1986. Excavations at Plettenberg Bay, South Africa of the camp-site of the survivors of the wreck of the Sao Goncalo, 1630.



Figure 1. 1:50 000 Locality Map (3423AB Plettenberg Bay)



Figure 2. Location of proposed boardwalk and bird hide positions