PALAEONTOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

PROSPECTING RIGHT APPLICATION ON FARM SOETFONTEIN 606, NEAR POSTMASBURG, IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

2023

NC 30/5/1/1/2/12685 PR

Declaration of Independence

I, Elize Butler, declare that –

General declaration:

- I act as the independent palaeontological specialist in this application
- I will perform the work relating to the application in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favorable to the applicant
- I declare that there are no circumstances that may compromise my objectivity in performing such work.
- I have expertise in conducting palaeontological impact assessments, including knowledge of the Act, Regulations and any guidelines that have relevance to the proposed activity.
- I will comply with the Act, Regulations, and all other applicable legislation.
- I will take into account, to the extent possible, the matters listed in section 38 of the NHRA when preparing the application and any report relating to the application.
- I have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity.
- I undertake to disclose to the applicant and the competent authority all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing - any decision to be taken with respect to the application by the competent authority; and - the objectivity of any report, plan or document to be prepared by myself for submission to the competent authority.
- I will ensure that information containing all relevant facts in respect of the application is distributed or made available to interested and affected parties and the public and that participation by interested and affected parties is facilitated in such a manner that all interested and affected parties will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate and to provide comments on documents that are produced to support the application.
- I will provide the competent authority with access to all information at my disposal regarding the application, whether such information is favorable to the applicant or not
- All the particulars furnished by me in this form are true and correct.
- I will perform all other obligations as expected a palaeontological specialist in terms of the Act and the constitutions of my affiliated professional bodies; and
- I realize that a false declaration is an offense in terms of regulation 71 of the Regulations and is punishable in terms of section 24F of the NEMA.

Disclosure of Vested Interest

I do not have and will not have any vested interest (either business, financial, personal, or other) in the proposed activity proceeding other than remuneration for work performed in terms of the Regulations.

PALAEONTOLOGICAL CONSULTANT: Banzai Environmental (Pty) Ltd

CONTACT PERSON: Elize Butler

Tel: +27 844478759

Email: info@banzai-group.com

SIGNATURE: 

The heritage impact assessment report has been compiled considering the National Environmental Management Act 1998 (NEMA) and Environmental Impact Regulations 2014 as amended, requirements for specialist reports, Appendix 6, as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Checklist for Specialist studies conformance with Appendix 6 of the EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended)

Requirements of Appendix 6 – GN R326 EIA Regulations of 7 April 2017	**Relevant section in report**
1.(1) (a) (i) Details of the specialist who prepared the report	Page ii and Section 2 of Report – Contact details and company and Appendix A
(ii) The expertise of that person to compile a specialist report including a curriculum vita	Section 2 – refer to **Appendix A**
(b) A declaration that the person is independent in a form as may be specified by the competent authority	Page ii of the report
(c) An indication of the scope of, and the purpose for which, the report was prepared	Section 4 – Objective
(cA) An indication of the quality and age of base data used for the specialist report	Section 5 – Geological and Palaeontological history
(cB) a description of existing impacts on the site, cumulative impacts of the proposed development and levels of acceptable change;	Section 10
(d) The duration, date and season of the site investigation and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment	Section 1 and 11
(e) a description of the methodology adopted in preparing the report or carrying out the specialised process inclusive of equipment and modelling used	Section 7 Approach and Methodology
(f) details of an assessment of the specific identified sensitivity of the site related to the proposed activity or activities and its associated structures and infrastructure, inclusive of a site plan identifying site alternative;	Section 1 and 11
(g) An identification of any areas to be avoided, including buffers	No buffers or areas of sensitivity identified Section 5
(h) A map superimposing the activity including the associated structures and infrastructure on the environmental sensitivities of the site including areas to be avoided, including buffers;	Section 5 – Geological and Palaeontological history
(i) A description of any assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps in knowledge;	Section 7.1 – Assumptions and Limitation

Requirements of Appendix 6 – GN R326 EIA Regulations of 7 April 2017	**Relevant section in report**
(j) A description of the findings and potential implications of such findings on the impact of the proposed activity, including identified alternatives, on the environment	Section 1 and 11
(k) Any mitigation measures for inclusion in the EMPr	Section 12
(l) Any conditions for inclusion in the environmental authorisation	Section 12
(m) Any monitoring requirements for inclusion in the EMPr or environmental authorisation	Section 12
(n)(i) A reasoned opinion as to whether the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorised and	Section 1 and 11
(n)(iA) A reasoned opinion regarding the acceptability of the proposed activity or activities; and	
(n)(ii) If the opinion is that the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorised, any avoidance, management and mitigation measures that should be included in the EMPr, and where applicable, the closure plan	Section 1 and 11
(o) A description of any consultation process that was undertaken during the course of carrying out the study	Not applicable. A public consultation process will be conducted as part of the EIA and EMPr process. N/A
(p) A summary and copies if any comments that were received during any consultation process	N/A
(q) Any other information requested by the competent authority.	N/A
(2) Where a government notice by the Minister provides for any protocol or minimum information requirement to be applied to a specialist report, the requirements as indicated in such notice will apply.	Section 3 compliance with SAHRA guidelines

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Banzai Environmental was appointed to conduct the Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) to assess the Prospecting Right Application on Farm Soetfontein 606 near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape Province. To comply with the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999, section 38) (NHRA), this PIA is necessary to verify if fossil material could potentially be present in the planned development area, to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development on the Palaeontological Heritage and to mitigate possible damage to fossil resources.

The Soetfontein Prospecting Right Application is mostly underlain by surface limestone, while portions are also underlain by Quaternary alluvium along the Groenwaterspruit, Quaternary sands and the Kuruman and Daniëlskuil Formations of the Asbestos Hills Subgroup (Griquatown Group, Transvaal Supergroup). The PalaeoMap of the South African Heritage Resources Information System indicates that the Palaeontological Sensitivity of the Quaternary Alluvium and Sands are Moderate, that of the Quaternary surface limestones are High, while that of the Daniëlskuil and Kuruman Formations are Very High (Almond and Pether, 2009; Almond *et al*., 2013).

A site-specific field survey of the development footprint was conducted on foot and by motor vehicle in March 2023. No fossiliferous outcrop was detected in the development footprint. An overall Low Significance has thus been allocated to the development footprint. It is thus considered that the prospecting development will not lead to detrimental impacts on the palaeontological reserves of the area. The prospecting may be authorised in its whole extent, as the development footprint is not considered sensitive in terms of palaeontological resources.

It is thus **recommended that:**

- The Environmental Control Officer (ECO), responsible for the development, should be aware of the possibility of finding fossils in the development area.
- If Palaeontological Heritage is uncovered during surface clearing and excavations the **Chance find Protocol** attached should be implemented immediately. These discoveries ought to be protected (if possible, *in situ*) and the ECO must report to SAHRA (Contact details: SAHRA, 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town. PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000, South Africa. Tel: 021 462 4502. Fax: +27 (0)21 462 4509. Web: www.sahra.org.za) so that correct mitigation (recording and collection) can be carry out by a paleontologist.

Before any fossil material can be collected from the development site, the specialist involved would need to apply for a collection permit from SAHRA. Fossil material must be housed in an official collection (museum or university), while all reports and fieldwork should meet the minimum standards for palaeontological impact studies proposed by SAHRA (2012). It is consequently recommended that no further palaeontological heritage studies, ground truthing and/or specialist mitigation are required pending the discovery of newly discovered fossils.

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Appendix 1: Curriculum Vitae

1 INTRODUCTION

Prospecting on Farm Soetfontein 606 near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape is proposed. The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DME) granted an Environmental Authorisation (EA) (NC30/5/1/1/2/12685EM) for the Prospecting Right Application on the farm Soetfontein 606 situated in the Magisterial District of Hay, in the Northern Cape on 9 December 2021. As no Heritage Impact Assessment was conducted for the Project the South African Heritage Resources Agency lodged an appeal against the Environmental Authorisation for the following reason: "SAHRHA was not provided the opportunity to provide comments on the EA application regarding the assessment of the impact to heritage resources within the proposed development area as per section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act, Act 25 of 1999 (NHRA) and section 40(2)c of the NEMA EIA Regulations".

This Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) Report was commissioned as part of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).

2 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE AUTHOR

This study has been conducted by Mrs Elize Butler, palaeontologist of Banzai Environmental (Pty) Ltd. She has conducted approximately 400 palaeontological impact assessments for developments in the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern, Central, and Northern Cape, Northwest, Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga. She has an MSc (*cum laude*) in Zoology (specializing in Palaeontology) from the University of the Free State, South Africa and has been working in Palaeontology for more than twenty-eight years. She has experience in locating, collecting, and curating fossils, including exploration field trips in search of new localities in the Karoo Basin. She has been a member of the Palaeontological Society of South Africa (PSSA) since 2006 and has been conducting PIAs since 2014.

A curriculum vitae is included in Appendix 1 of this specialist input report.

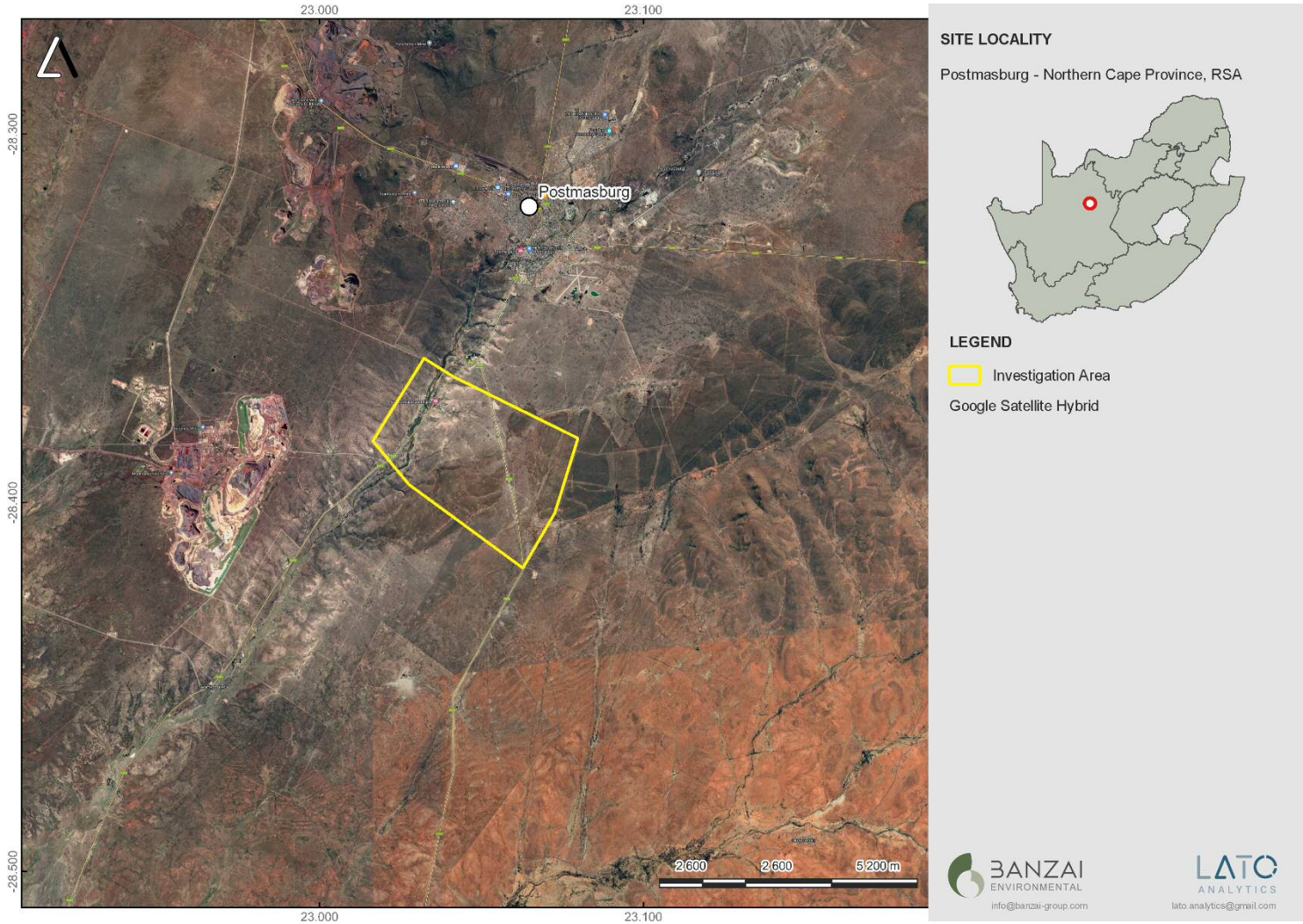


***Figure 1**: Google Earth Image (2022) of the location of the proposed Prospecting Right Application on farm Soetfontein 606 near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape Province.*

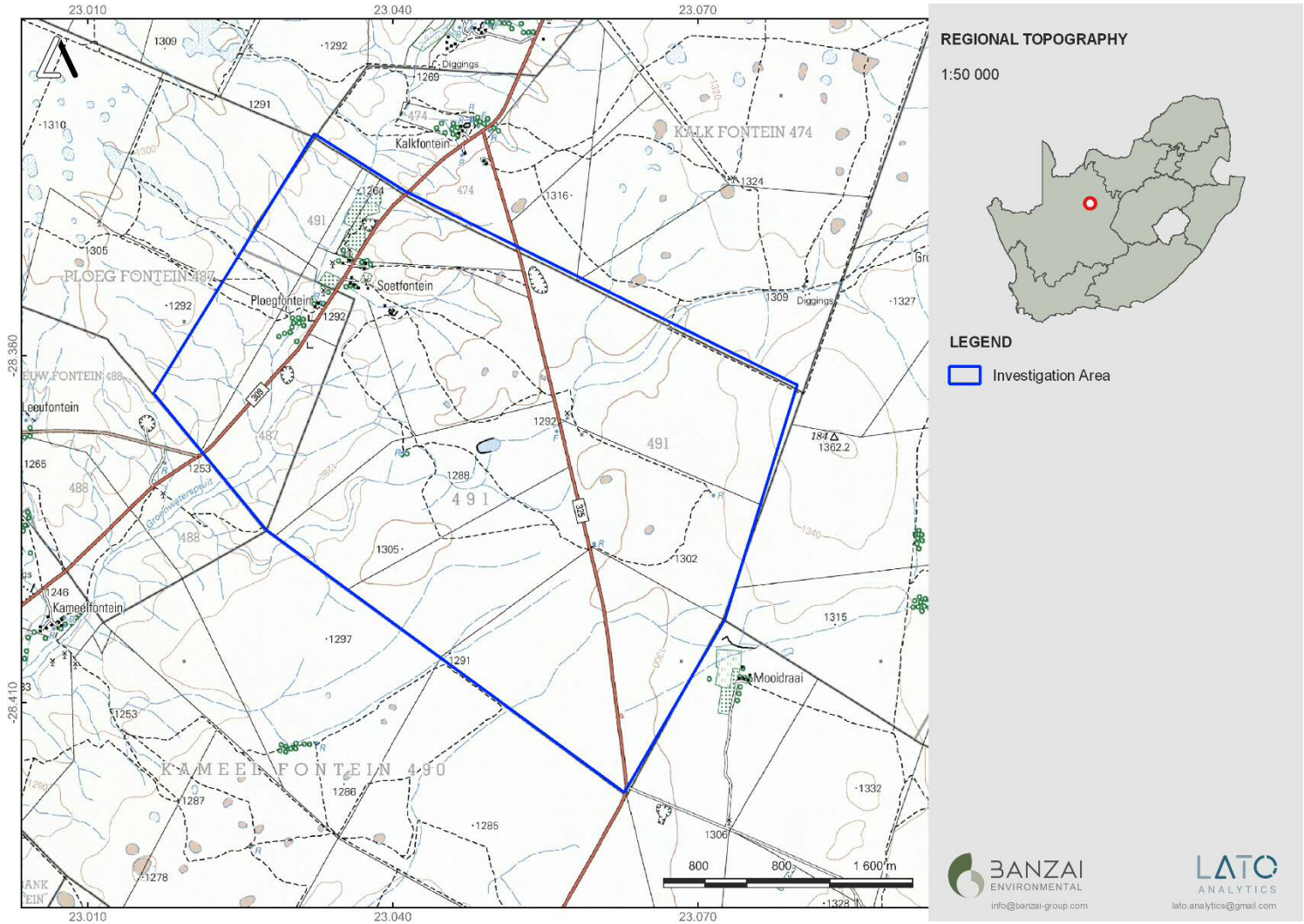


Figure 2: *Topography of the proposed Prospecting Right Application on farm Soetfontein 606 near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape Province.*

3 LEGISLATION

3.1 National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999)

Cultural Heritage in South Africa, includes all heritage resources, and is protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) (NHRA). Heritage resources as defined in Section 3 of the Act include **"all objects recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa, including archaeological and palaeontological objects and material, meteorites and rare geological specimens**".

The identification, evaluation and assessment of any cultural heritage site, artefact or finds in the South African context is required and governed by the following legislation:

- National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) Act 107 of 1998
- National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) Act 25 of 1999
- Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) Act 28 of 2002
- Notice 648 of the Government Gazette 45421- general requirements for undertaking an initial site sensitivity verification where no specific assessment protocol has been identified.

The following section in each Act are directly applicable to the identification, assessment, and evaluation of cultural heritage resources.

GNR 982 (Government Gazette 38282, 14 December 2014) promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) Act 107 of 1998

- Basic Assessment Report (BAR) – Regulations 19 and 23
- Environmental Impacts Assessment (EIA) – Regulation 23
- Environmental Scoping Report (ESR) – Regulation 21
- Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) – Regulations 19 and 23

National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) Act 25 of 1999

- Protection of Heritage Resources – Sections 34 to 36
- Heritage Resources Management – Section 38

MPRDA Regulations of 2014

Environmental reports to be compiled for application of mining right – Regulation 48

- Contents of scoping report – Regulation 49
- Contents of environmental impact assessment report – Regulation 50
- Environmental management programme – Regulation 51
- Environmental management plan – Regulation 52

The NEMA (No 107 of 1998) states that an integrated EMP should (23:2 (b)) "…*identify, predict, and evaluate the actual and potential impact on the environment, socio-economic conditions and cultural heritage*".

In agreement with legislative requirements, EIA rating standards as well as SAHRA policies, the following comprehensive and legally compatible PIA report has been compiled.

Palaeontological heritage is exceptional and non-renewable and is protected by the NHRA. Palaeontological resources and may not be unearthed, broken moved, or destroyed by any development without prior assessment and without a permit from the relevant heritage resources authority as per section 35 of the NHRA.

This Palaeontological Impact assessment forms part of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and adheres to the conditions of the Act. According to **Section 38 (1)**, an HIA is required to assess any potential impacts to palaeontological heritage within the development footprint where:

- the construction of a road, wall, power line, pipeline, canal or other similar form of linear development or barrier exceeding 300 m in length.
- the construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50 m in length.
- any development or other activity which will change the character of a site—
- Exceeding 5 000 m^2 in extent; or
- involving three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof; or
- involving three or more erven or divisions thereof which have been consolidated within the past five years; or
- the costs of which will exceed a sum set in terms of regulations by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority
- the re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000 m^2 in extent.
- or any other category of development provided for in regulations by SAHRA or a Provincial heritage resources authority.

4 OBJECTIVE

This study forms part of the Heritage Impact Assessment Report. According to the "SAHRA APM Guidelines: Minimum Standards for the Archaeological and Palaeontological Components of Impact Assessment Reports" the purpose of the PIA is: 1) to identify the palaeontological importance of the rock formations in the footprint; 2) to evaluate the palaeontological magnitude of the formations; 3) to clarify the **impact** on fossil heritage; and 4) to suggest how the developer might protect and lessen possible damage to fossil heritage.

The palaeontological status of each rock section is calculated as well as the possible impact of the development on fossil heritage by a) the palaeontological importance of the rocks, b) the type of development and c) the quantity of bedrock removed.

All possible information is consulted to compile a scoping report, and this includes the following: Provisional DFFE Screening Tool, SAHRIS Palaeosensitivity map, all Palaeontological Impact Assessment reports in the

same area; aerial photos and Google Earth images, topographical and geological maps as well as scientific articles of specimens from the development area and Assemblage Zones.

When the development footprint has a moderate to high palaeontological sensitivity a field-based assessment is necessary. The desktop and the field survey of the exposed rock determine the impact significance of the planned development and recommendations for further studies or mitigation are made. Destructive impacts on palaeontological heritage usually only occur during the construction phase while the excavations will change the current topography and destruct or permanently seal-in fossils at or below the ground surface. Fossil Heritage will then no longer be accessible for scientific research.

During a site investigation the palaeontologist does not only survey the development but also tries to determine the density and diversity of fossils in the development area. This is confirmed by examining representative exposures of fossiliferous rocks (sedimentary rocks contain fossil heritage whereas igneous and metamorphic rocks are mostly unfossiliferous). Rock exposures that are investigated usually contains a large portion of the stratigraphic unit, can be accessed easily and comprise of unweathered (fresh) exposed rock. These exposures may be natural (rocky outcrops in stream or river banks, cliffs, dongas) but could also be artificial (quarries, open building excavations and even railway and road cuttings). It is common practice for palaeontologist to log well-preserved fossils (GPS, and stratigraphic data) during field assessment studies.

Mitigation usually precedes construction or may occur during construction when potentially fossiliferous bedrock is exposed. Mitigation comprises the collection and recording of fossils. Preceding excavation of any fossils, a permit from SAHRA must be obtained and the material will have to be housed in a permitted institution. When mitigation is applied correctly, a positive impact is possible as knowledge of local palaeontological heritage may be increased.

The fossil potential of the Soetfontein prospecting area was determined by criss-crossing the development footprint and by physically investigating the bedrock outcrops to determine the lithology and fossil content of the outcrops. Selected potentially fossiliferous sites (e.g., along drainage lines, hillslopes and erosion gullies) were specifically investigated. Fossils occurring at the surface is very unpredictable and as the area is very large and a representative sample size of the area has been investigated. Fossil sites are usually discovered by chance and a representative subsample is all that can be expected. However, it is important to note that the absence of fossils in a development footprint does not necessarily mean that palaeontological significant material is not present on site (on or beneath ground surface).

General Requirements:

- Adherence to the content requirements for specialist reports in accordance with Appendix 6 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended.
- Adherence to all applicable best practice recommendations, appropriate legislation, and authority requirements.

- Submit a comprehensive overview of all appropriate legislation, guidelines.
- Description of the proposed project and provide information regarding the developer and consultant who commissioned the study.
- Description and location of the proposed development and provide geological and topographical maps.
- Provide Palaeontological and geological history of the affected area.
- Identification of sensitive areas to be avoided (providing shapefiles/kml's) in the proposed development.
- Evaluation of the significance of the planned development during the Pre-construction, Construction, Operation, Decommissioning Phases and Cumulative impacts. Potential impacts should be rated in terms of the direct, indirect, and cumulative:

a. **Direct impacts** are impacts that are caused directly by the activity and generally occur at the same time and at the place of the activity.

b. **Indirect impacts** of an activity are indirect or induced changes that may occur as a result of the activity.

c. Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impact of the proposed activity on a common resource when added to the impacts of other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future activities.

- Fair assessment of alternatives (infrastructure alternatives have been provided):
- Recommend mitigation measures to minimise the impact of the proposed development; and
- Implications of specialist findings for the proposed development (such as permits, licenses etc).

5 GEOLOGICAL AND PALAEONTOLOGICAL HISTORY

The geology of the proposed Prospecting Right Application on farm Soetfontein 606 near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape Province is depicted on the 1:250 000 Postmasburg 2822 (1977) Geological Map (Council of Geoscience) (**Figure 3, Table 2**). According to this map, the study area is mostly underlain by surface limestone (Ql, dark yllow), Quaternary alluvium (yellow single bird figure) on the river banks of Groenwaterspruit, Quaternary sands (Qs; white with yellow dots) and the Kuruman Formation (Vak, dark brown) and Daniëlskuil Formation (Vad; light brown) of the Asbestos Hills Subgroup (Griquatown Group, Transvaal Supergroup). Although a short explanation is printed on the Geological Map itself, a thorough sheet explanation is not supplied. This map is outdated and out of print. Recent, modifications to the stratigraphic subdivision and alignments of the Precambruim rocks present in the Kathu area has been finalized. Eriksson *et al.* (2006) conducted stratigraphic studies on the Transvaal Supergroup while Moen (2006) conducted the study for the Olifantshoek Supergroup.

Simplified regional geological maps based on Cairncross and Beukes (2013) and Smith and Beukes (2016) were published. These geological maps (**Figure 4-6**) indicates that the proposed development is located on the western side of the Maremane Dome (a major N-S trending anticline in the Early Proterozoic bedrocks of the Ghaap Group, Transvaal Supergroup). The Maremane Dome contain carbonate rocks of the Campbell Rand Subgroup (Ghaap Group, Transvaal Supergroup) overlain by the Kalahari Group.

In the past the shallow marine carbonates of the Campbell Rand Subgroup (Ghaap Group) were included in the Ghaapplato Formation. It is about 2.6 to 2.5 Ga (billion years old) and was deposited on the shallow submerged

shelf of the Kaapvaal Craton. This carbonate platform is very thick (about 1.6 -2.5 km) and comprise of cherts with minor tuffs and siliciclastic rocks as well as dolostones and dolomitic limestones.

Recurring changes in sea level were triggered by changing depositional cycles in shallow water facies. Stromatolitic limestones and dolostones, laminated calcilutites, oolites, cherts, with subordinate siliclastics (siltstones and shales) and minor tuffs (Beukes 1980, Beukes 1986, Sumner 2002, Eriksson *et al.* 2006, Sumner & Beukes 2006) are present. The Campbellrand carbonate bedrocks in the area are karstified and probably not exposed.

At the western side of the Maremane Dome (Campbell Rand carbonates, Asbesheuwels Banded Iron Formation and Koegas quartzites and iron formation) a major unconformity exists at the base of the Palaeoproterozoic Elim Group (basal Keis Supergroup). This unconformity is (about 2.2-2.0 Ga) cuts the folded Ghaap Group succession and is associated with the development of manganese and iron ores. These ores are mined in the Sishen – Postmasburg region of Griqualand West. These ores are associated with the palaeokarst-related Manganore Formation overlying the Campbell Rand Subgroup carbonates of the Maremane Dome as well as the Gamagara Formation at the base of the Elim Group. In the past the Elim Group was included in the Olifantshoek Group (Schalkwyk 2005, Van Niekerk 2006, Da Silva 2011, Cairncross & Beukes 2013, Smith & Beukes 2016). In the greater Kathu region, the Postmasburg group comprise of basaltic to andesitic lavas of the Ongeluk Formation (dated to 2.2 Ga) that crops out south of the Gamagara River.

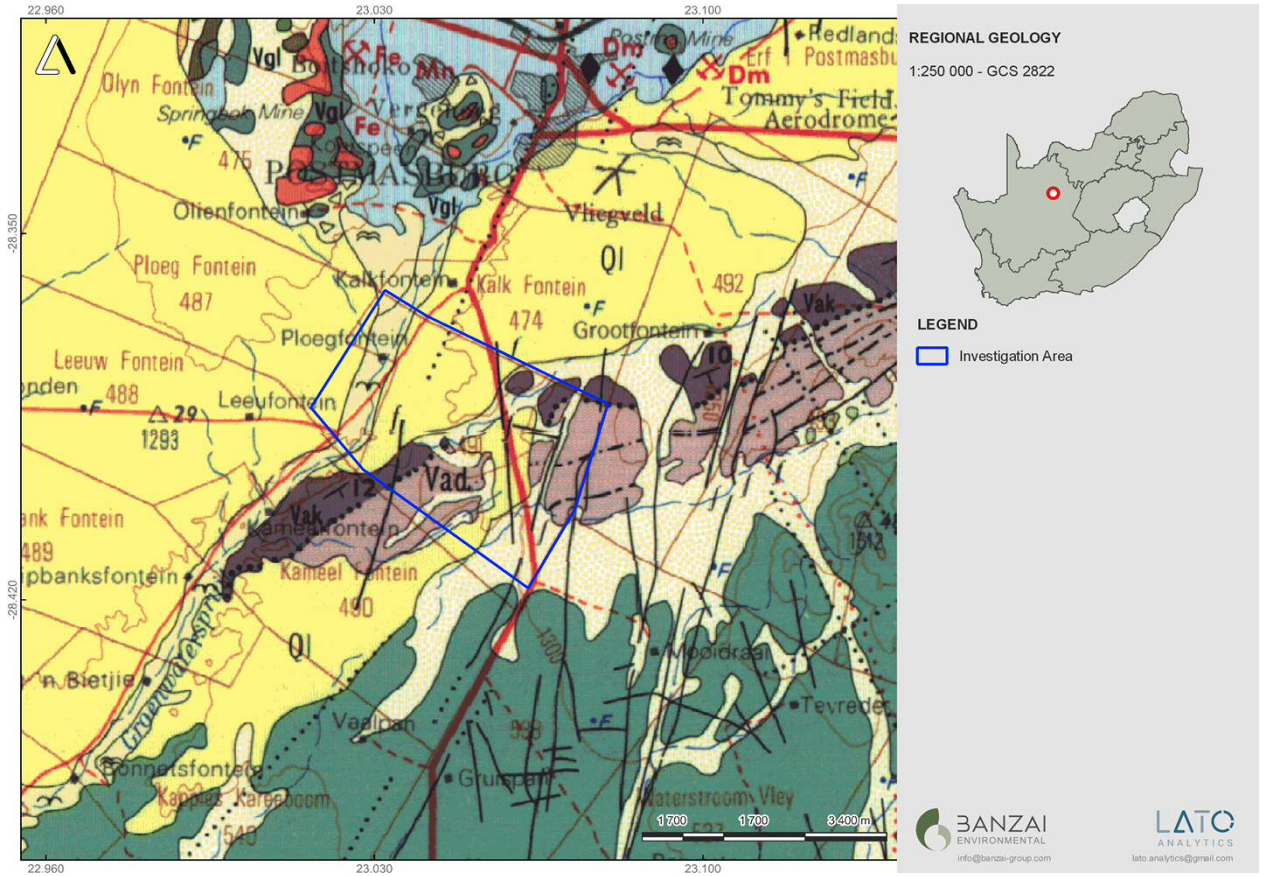
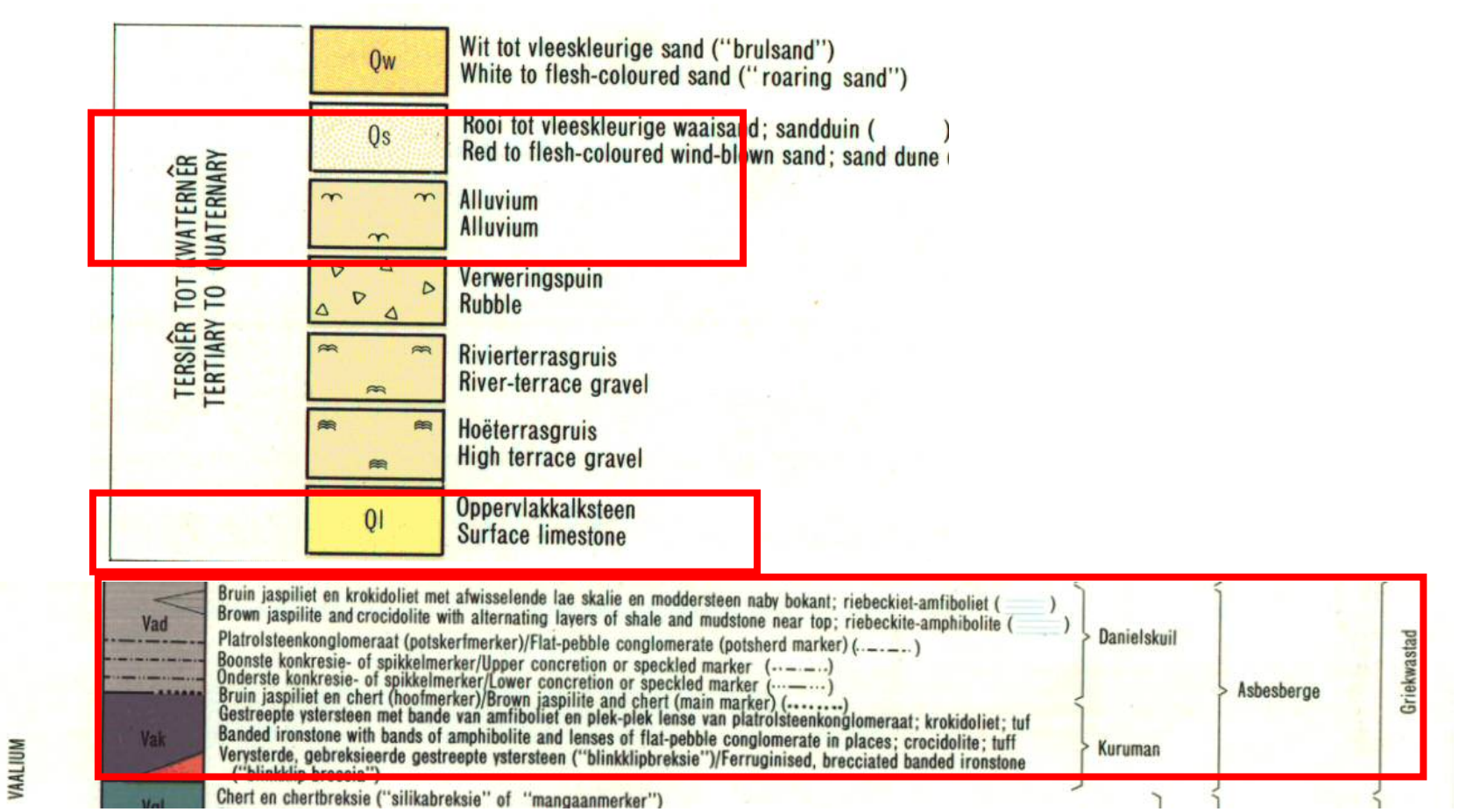


***Figure 3**: The extract of the 1:250 000 Postmasburg 2822 (1977) Geological map (Council of Geoscience, Pretoria) indicates that the proposed prospecting right application is underlain by* Quaternary surface limestone (Ql yellow), Quaternary sands (Qs; pale yellow), Quaternary alluvium (yellow, single bird figure), Kuruman Formation (Vak, dark brown) and Daniëlskuil Formation (Vad; light brown) of the Asbestos Hills Subgroup (Griquatown Group, Transvaal Supergroup).

Table 2: Lithology of the 1:250 000 *Postmasburg 2822 (1977) Geological map (Council of Geoscience, Pretoria)*



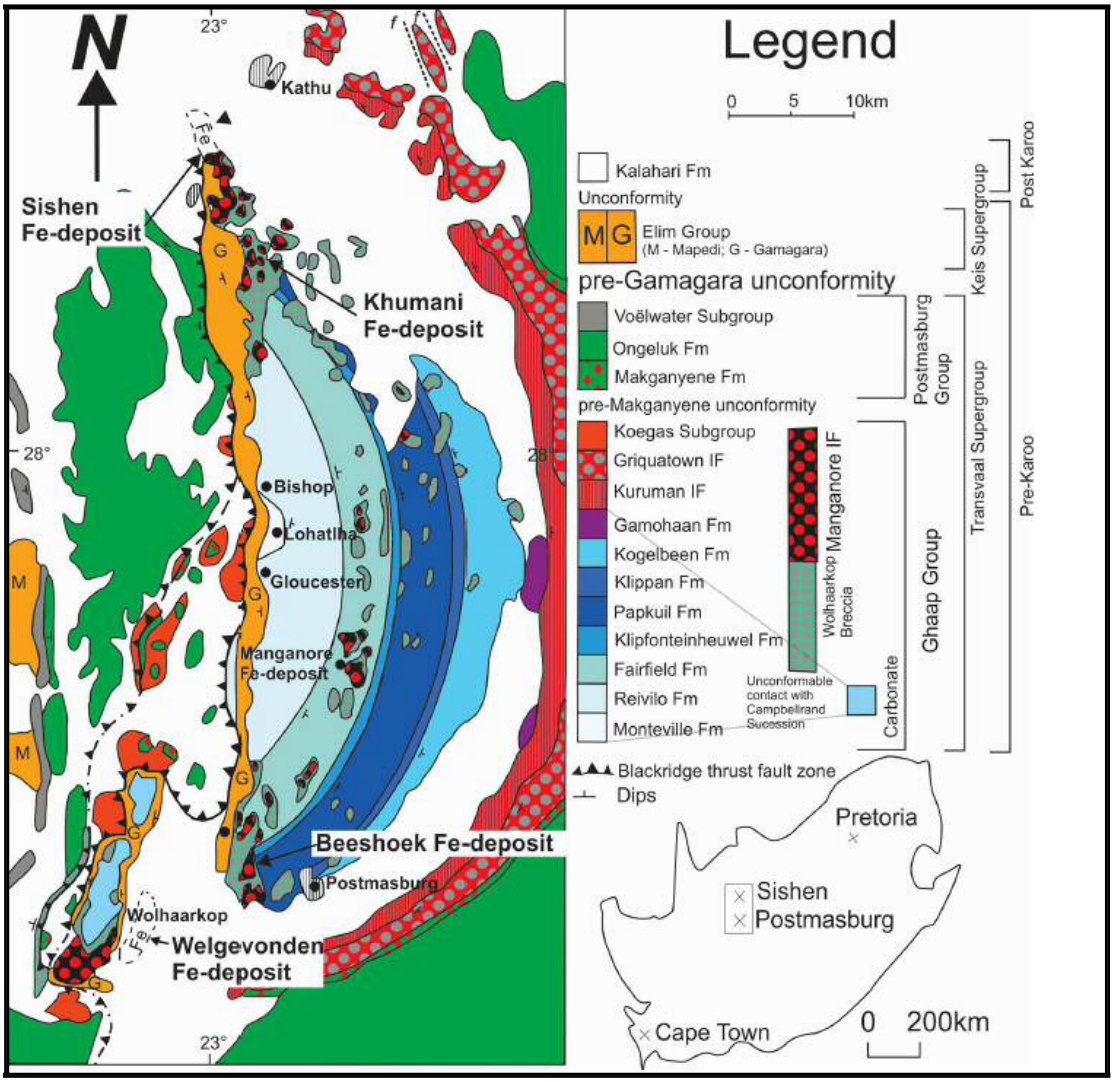


***Figure 4**: Updated Regional Geology of the Maremane Dome in the Northern Cape (taken from Smith & Beukes 2016).*

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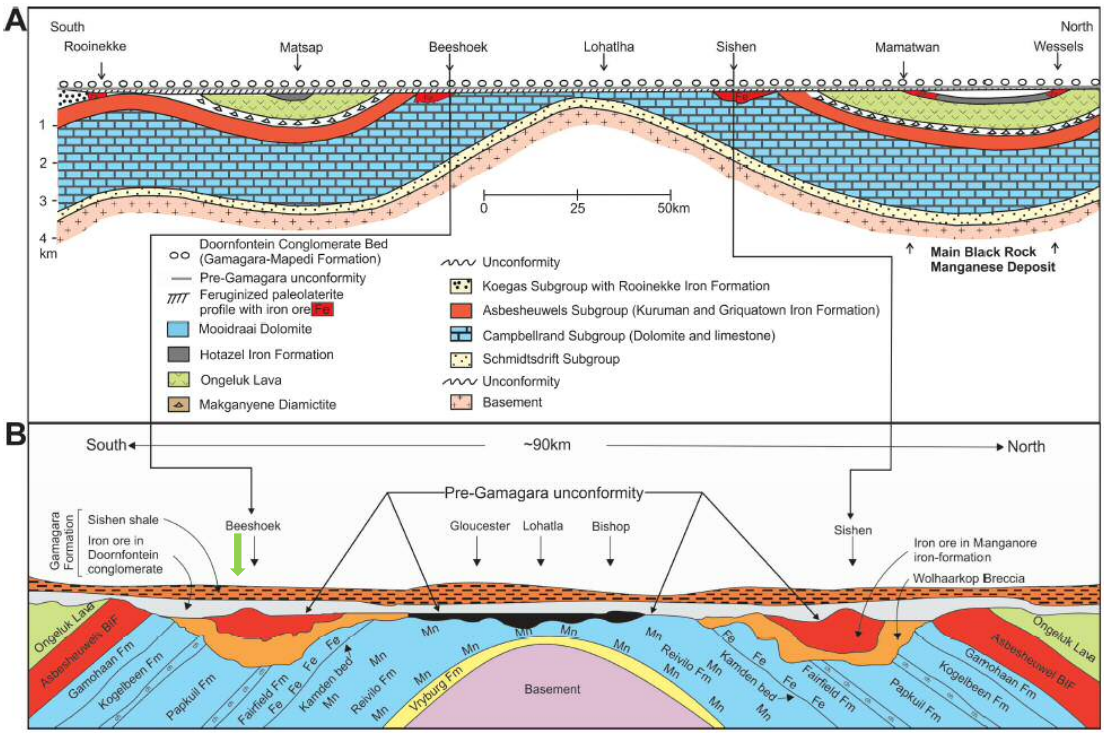


***Figure 5**: Schematic north-south cross section through (A) the western margin of the Griqualand West and (B) the Maremane Dome (modified after Cairncross et al, 1997; Van Deventer, 2009). Sub-surface dips of lithology are exaggerated for illustration purposes (taken from Smith & Beukes 2016). The approximate location of the proposed development is indicated by the green arrow.*

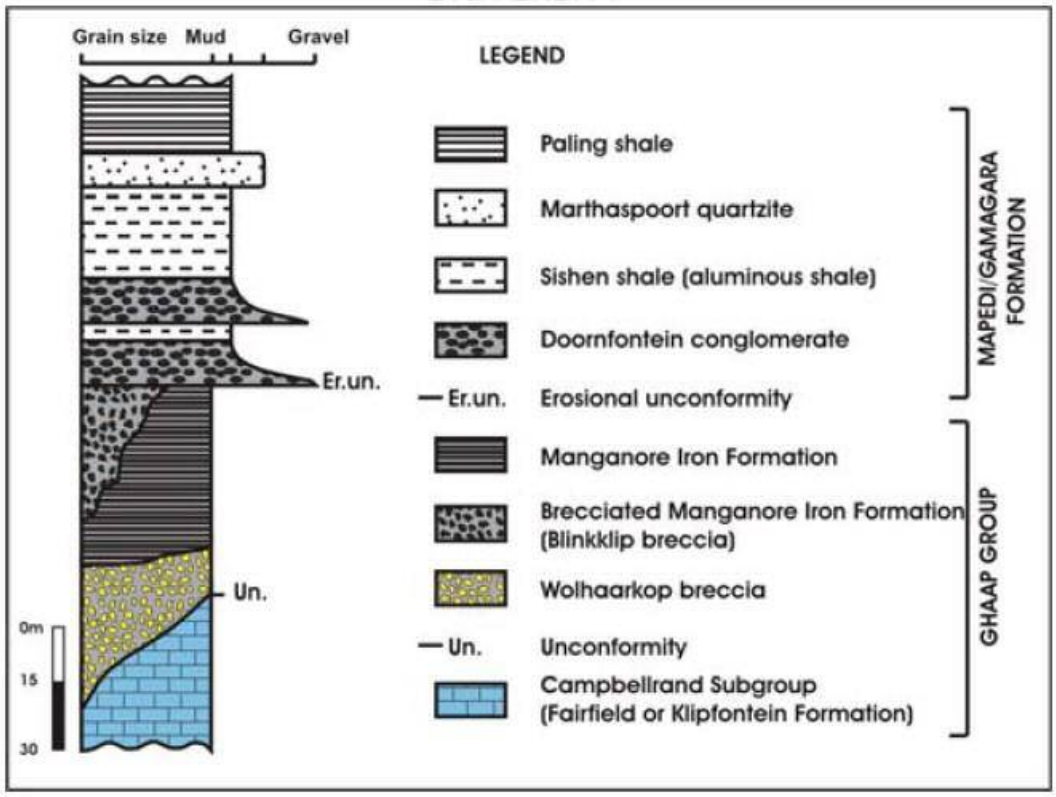


***Figure 6**:Stratigraphy of the iron formations in the Sishen-Postmasburg area (Schalkwyk 2005).*

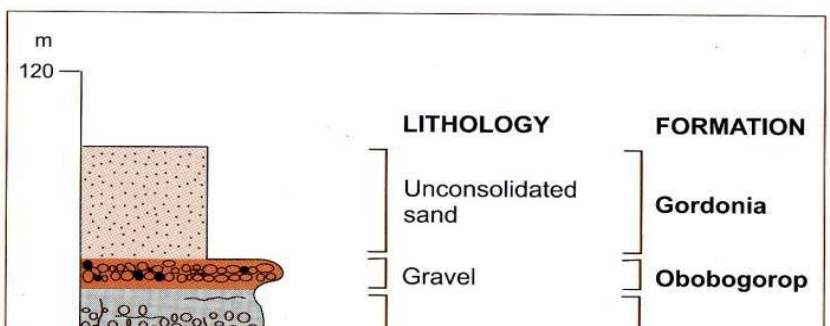
The base of the Elim Group (Kheis Supergroup) is formed by the Gamagara Formation and the ferruginous Doornfontein conglomerates at its base. The Manganore Formation in underlain by the Wolhaarkop Breccia that forms part of a complex, supergene-enriched, lateritic weathering profile below the 2.2-2.0 Ga pre-Gamagara Unconformity associated with the collapse of the Asbestos Hills Subgroup BIF into karstic solution hollows on the Maremane Dome.

In the Postmasburg region the older Precambrian rocks are mantled by the late Cretaceous to Late Caenozoic aeolian sands, clays, calcretes and gravels of the Kalahari Group Group [approximately Ca 65 – 2.5 million years old (Ma)]. Studies has shown that the Kalahari Group sediments that overlies the Precambrian rocks are about 80 m thick (Haddon, 2005). The earliest Kalahari beds are assigned to the Wessels Formation (basal gravels) and Budin Formation (calcareous clays) and is probably Late Cretaceous in age (Partridge *et al.* 2006).

The top 15 m of the Kalahari sediments consist of clays, calcretised siltstones, and pebbly horizons with the occurrence of solution hollows along joint surfaces (**Figure 7**) (10 m from the surface). Calcretised silcretes with *in situ* brecciation are present close to the surface. Thick pedogenic calcretes (Plio-Pleistocene Mokalanen Formation) are mapped along the Ga-Mogara drainage line and underlies the Kalahari sands in this area thus indicating the seasonally arid climates over the last five million years (Truter *et al.* 1938; Boardman and Visser 1958). Surface limestones may be up to 20 m thick and are locally conglomeratic with clasts of reworked calcrete and foreign pebbles. These limestones might be secondarily silicified.

Pleistocene Kalahari sands (Gordonia Formation) has been described to mantle thick calcretes and down wasted surface gravels (Almond 2013). He described a range of calcrete types namely brecciated, gravelly, honeycomb, silicified, and karstified facies, the latter with an associated sand- or gravel-infilled solution hollows. Unconsolidated, reddish-brown aeolian sands of the Quaternary Gordonia Formation are present in the Sishen area. These sands are Late Pliocene / Early Pleistocene to Recent in age due to the Middle to Later Stone Age stone tools (Dingle *et al*., 1983, p. 291) found in them. Recent studies have dated the Pliocene - Pleistocene boundary from 1.8Ma back to 2.588 Ma and placed the Gordonia Formation almost completely within the Pleistocene Epoch.

The fossil assemblages of the Kalahari are generally high in diversity that occur over a wide range. These fossils represent terrestrial plants and animals with a close resemblance to living forms. Fossil assemblages include bivalves, diatoms, gastropod shells, ostracods and trace fossils. Late Cenozoic calcrete may comprise of bones, horn corns as well as mammalian teeth. Tortoise remains have also been uncovered as well as trace fossils which includes termite and insect's burrows and mammalian trackways. Amphibian and crocodile remains have been uncovered where the depositional settings in the past were wetter. Fossils are mostly associated with ancient lakes, pans and river systems.



According to the SAHRIS Palaeosensitivity map (**Figure 8)** the proposed development is underlain by sediments of Very High (red), High (orange) and Moderate (green) Palaeontological Sensitivity.

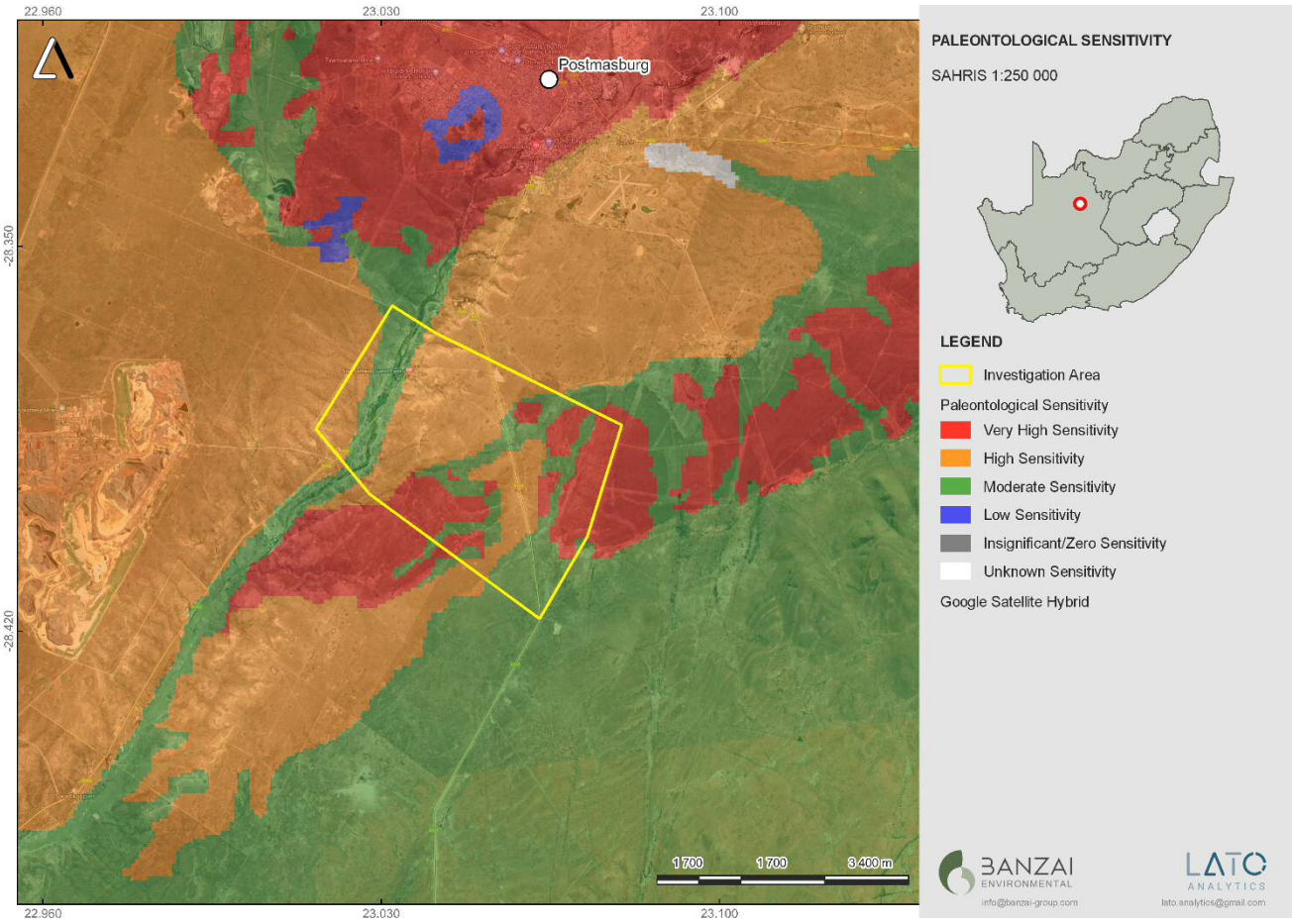


Figure 8: *Extract of the 1:250 000 SAHRIS PalaeoMap map (Council of Geosciences, Pretoria) indicating the Palaeontological Sensitivity of the proposed study area near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape.*

Table 3:Palaeontological Sensitivity

Colour	Sensitivity	Required Action
RED	**VERY HIGH**	**Field assessment and protocol for finds is required**
ORANGE/YELLOW	HIGH	Desktop study is required and based on the outcome of the desktop study; a field assessment is likely
GREEN	**MODERATE**	**Desktop study is required**
BLUE	LOW	No palaeontological studies are required however a protocol for finds is required
GREY	INSIGNIFICANT/ZERO	No palaeontological studies are required
WHITE/CLEAR	UNKNOWN	These areas will require a minimum of a desktop study. As more information comes to light, SAHRA will continue to populate the map.

6 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE SITE

The proposed Soetfontein Prospecting Right Application is located about 6km south of Postmasburg in the Northern Cape Province.

Table 4:Coordinates of the site.

	Latitude	Longitude
Northern Border	28°21'35.91"S	23° 1'56.78"E
Eastern Border	28°22'57.86"S	23° 4'47.16"E
Southern Border	28°25'3.02"S	23° 3'48.86"E
Western Border	28°22'59.96"S	23° 1'0.12"E

7 METHODS

The aim of a desktop study is to evaluate the risk to palaeontological heritage in the proposed development. This includes all trace fossils and fossils. All available information is consulted to compile a desktop study and includes Palaeontological impact assessment reports in the same area, aerial photos, and Google Earth images, topographical as well as geological maps.

7.1 Assumptions and Limitations

When conducting a PIA several factors can affect the accuracy of the assessment. The focal point of geological maps is the geology of the area, and the sheet explanations were not meant to focus on palaeontological heritage. Many inaccessible regions of South Africa have not been reviewed by palaeontologists and data is generally based on aerial photographs. Locality and geological information of museums and universities databases have not been kept up to date or data collected in the past have not always been accurately documented. Comparable Assemblage Zones in other areas is used to provide information on the existence of fossils in an area which was not yet been documented. When similar Assemblage Zones and geological formations for Desktop studies is used it is generally **assumed** that exposed fossil heritage is present within the footprint**.**

8 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONSULTED

In compiling this report the following sources were consulted:

- Geological map 1:100 000, Geology of the Republic of South Africa (Visser 1984).
- A Google Earth map with polygons of the proposed development
- 1:250 000 Postmasburg 2822 (1977) Geological map (Council of Geoscience, Pretoria).
- Updated Geology produced by the Council of Geosciences (Pretoria).
- Palaeosensitivity map on SAHRIS (South African Heritage Resources Information System) website

- Various other PIAs has been conducted in the area (see references).
- A one day-comprehensive site-specific field survey of the development footprint for was conducted on foot and motor vehicle in March 2023.

9 SITE VISIT

A site-specific field survey of the development footprint was conducted on foot and by motor vehicle on March 2023. The study area is located on a flat topography with large areas comprising of surface limestones. No fossiliferous outcrops were identified in the prospecting area.

***Figure 9**: Study area has a flat topography mantled by low vegetation.*

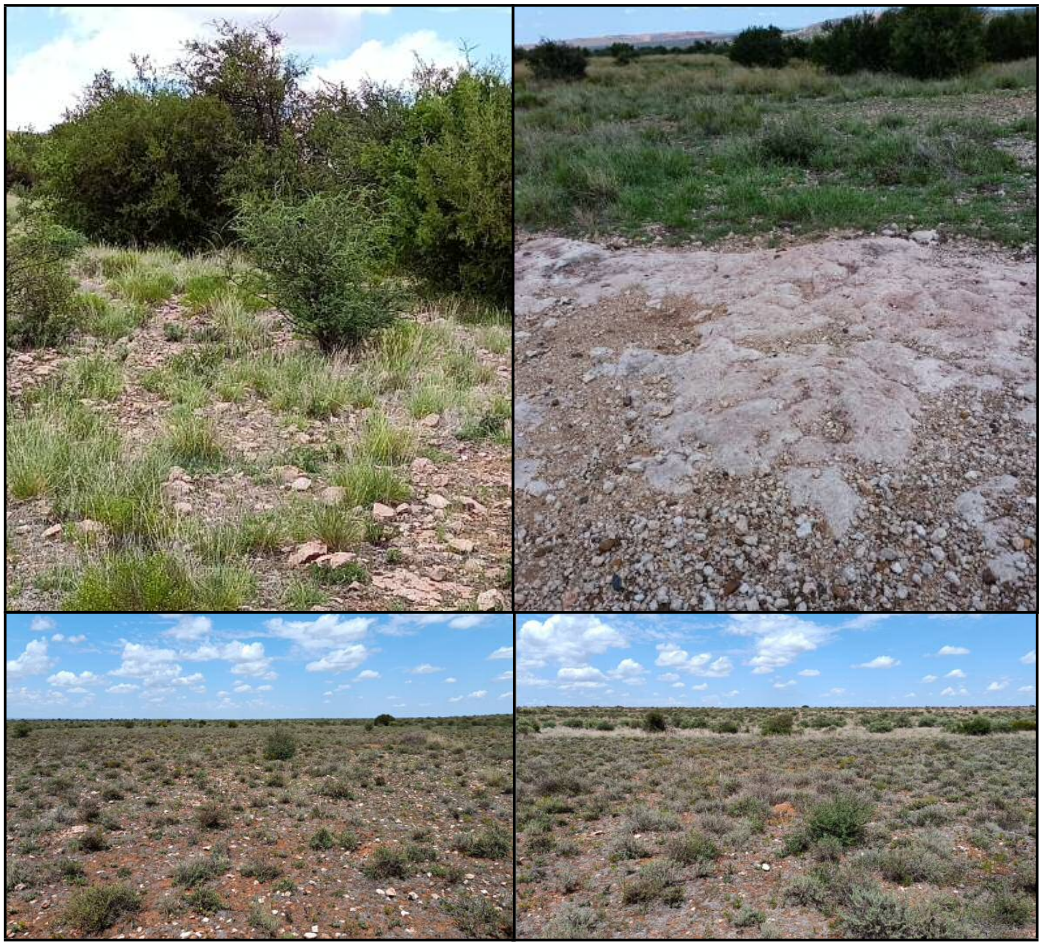


***Figure 10**: Surface limestones mantles large areas of the proposed prospecting areas.*

***Figure 11**: Banded Iron Formations (BIF) present in the Daniëlskuil and Kuruman Formations.*

10 ASSESSMENT METHOLOGY AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORMAT

10.1 Impact Assessment Methodology

Impact assessment must take account of the nature, scale, and duration of impacts on the environment whether such impacts are positive or negative. Each impact is also assessed according to the following project phases:

- Construction.
- Operation; and
- Decommissioning.

Where necessary, the proposal for mitigation or optimisation of an impact should be detailed. A brief discussion of the impact and the rationale behind the assessment of its significance should also be included. The rating system is applied to the potential impacts on the receiving environment and includes an objective evaluation of the mitigation of the impact. In assessing the significance of each impact, the following criteria is used:

Table 5: The rating system

NATURE		
The Nature of the Impact is the possible destruction of fossil heritage		
GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT		
This is defined as the area over which the impact will be experienced.		
1	Site	The impact will only affect the site.
2	Local/district	Will affect the local area or district.
3	Province/region	Will affect the entire province or region.
4	International and National	Will affect the entire country.
PROBABILITY		
This describes the chance of occurrence of an impact.		
1	Unlikely	The chance of the impact occurring is extremely low (Less than a 25% chance of occurrence).
2	Possible	The impact may occur (Between a 25% to 50% chance of occurrence).
3	Probable	The impact will likely occur (Between a 50% to 75% chance of occurrence).
4	Definite	Impact will certainly occur (Greater than a 75% chance of

		occurrence).
DURATION		
This describes the duration of the impacts. Duration indicates the lifetime of the impact as a result of the proposed activity.		
1	Short term	The impact will either disappear with mitigation or will be mitigated through natural processes in a span shorter than the construction phase (0 – 1 years), or the impact will last for the period of a relatively short construction period and a limited recovery time after construction, thereafter it will be entirely negated (0 – 2 years).
2	Medium term	The impact will continue or last for some time after the construction phase but will be mitigated by direct human action or by natural processes thereafter (2 – 10 years).
3	Long term	The impact and its effects will continue or last for the entire operational life of the development, but will be mitigated by direct human action or by natural processes thereafter (10 – 30 years).
4	Permanent	The only class of impact that will be non-transitory. Mitigation either by man or natural process will not occur in such a way or such a time span that the impact can be considered indefinite.
INTENSITY/ MAGNITUDE		
Describes the severity of an impact.		
1	Low	Impact affects the quality, use and integrity of the system/component in a way that is barely perceptible.
2	Medium	Impact alters the quality, use and integrity of the system/component but system/component still continues to function in a moderately modified way and maintains general integrity (some impact on integrity).
3	High	Impact affects the continued viability of the system/ component and the quality, use, integrity and functionality of the system or component is severely impaired and may temporarily cease. High costs of rehabilitation and remediation.
4	Very high	Impact affects the continued viability of the system/component and the quality, use, integrity and functionality of the system or

		component permanently ceases and is irreversibly impaired. Rehabilitation and remediation often impossible. If possible rehabilitation and remediation often unfeasible due to extremely high costs of rehabilitation and remediation.
REVERSIBILITY		
This describes the degree to which an impact can be successfully reversed upon completion of the proposed activity.		
1	Completely reversible	The impact is reversible with implementation of minor mitigation measures.
2	Partly reversible	The impact is partly reversible but more intense mitigation measures are required.
3	Barely reversible	The impact is unlikely to be reversed even with intense mitigation measures.
4	Irreversible	The impact is irreversible, and no mitigation measures exist.
IRREPLACEABLE LOSS OF RESOURCES		
This describes the degree to which resources will be irreplaceably lost as a result of a proposed activity.		
1	No loss of resource	The impact will not result in the loss of any resources.
2	Marginal loss of resource	The impact will result in marginal loss of resources.
3	Significant loss of resources	The impact will result in significant loss of resources.
4	Complete loss of resources	The impact is result in a complete loss of all resources.
CUMULATIVE EFFECT		
This describes the cumulative effect of the impacts. A cumulative impact is an effect which in itself may not be significant but may become significant if added to other existing or potential impacts emanating from other similar or diverse activities as a result of the project activity in question.		
1	Negligible cumulative impact	The impact would result in negligible to no cumulative effects.
2	Low cumulative impact	The impact would result in insignificant cumulative effects.
3	Medium cumulative impact	The impact would result in minor cumulative effects.
4	High cumulative impact	The impact would result in significant cumulative effects
SIGNIFICANCE		

Significance is determined through a synthesis of impact characteristics. Significance is an indication of the importance of the impact in terms of both physical extent and time scale, and therefore indicates the level of mitigation required. The calculation of the significance of an impact uses the following formula: **(Extent + probability + reversibility + irreplaceability + duration + cumulative effect) x magnitude/intensity = X.** **The summation of the different criteria will produce a non-weighted value. By multiplying this value with the magnitude/intensity, the resultant value acquires a weighted characteristic which can be measured and assigned a significance rating.**		
Points	Impact significance rating	Description
6 to 28	Negative low impact	The anticipated impact will have negligible negative effects and will require little to no mitigation.
6 to 28	Positive low impact	The anticipated impact will have minor positive effects.
29 to 50	Negative medium impact	The anticipated impact will have moderate negative effects and will require moderate mitigation measures.
29 to 50	Positive medium impact	The anticipated impact will have moderate positive effects.
51 to 73	Negative high impact	The anticipated impact will have significant effects and will require significant mitigation measures to achieve an acceptable level of impact.
51 to 73	Positive high impact	The anticipated impact will have significant positive effects.
74 to 96	Negative very high impact	The anticipated impact will have highly significant effects and are unlikely to be able to be mitigated adequately. These impacts could be considered "fatal flaws".
74 to 96	Positive very high impact	The anticipated impact will have highly significant positive

10.2 Summary of Impact Tables

Loss of fossil heritage will be a negative impact. Only the site will be affected by the proposed development. The expected duration of the impact is assessed as potentially permanent too long term. In the absence of mitigation procedures, the damage or destruction of any palaeontological materials will be permanent. Impacts on palaeontological heritage during the construction phase could potentially occur and are regarded as having a Low probability. As fossil heritage will be destroyed the impact is irreversible. The significance of the impact occurring will be low.

Table 6: Summary of Impact Tables.								
	Site	Probability	Duration	Magnitude	Reversibility	Irreplicable Loss	Cumulative Effect	Significance
Pre-mitigation	1	2	4	3	4	4	2	51
Post Mitigation	1	2	4	1	4	4	2	17

11 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Soetfontein Prospecting Right Application is mostly underlain by surface limestone, while portions are also underlain by Quaternary alluvium, Quaternary sands and the Kuruman Formation and Daniëlskuil Formation of the Asbestos Hills Subgroup (Griquatown Group, Transvaal Supergroup). The PalaeoMap of the South African Heritage Resources Information System indicates that the Palaeontological Sensitivity of the Quaternary Alluvium and Sands are Moderate, that of the Quaternary surface limestones are High, while that of the Daniëlskuil and Kuruman Members are Very High (Almond and Pether, 2009; Almond *et al*., 2013).

A site-specific field survey of the development footprint was conducted on foot and by motor vehicle in March 2023. No fossiliferous outcrop was detected in the development footprint. An overall Low Significance has thus been allocated to the development footprint. The that the development will not lead to detrimental impacts on the palaeontological reserves of the area. The construction of the development may be authorised in its whole extent, as the development footprint is not considered sensitive in terms of palaeontological resources.

It is thus **recommended that:**

- The Environmental Control Officer (ECO), responsible for the development, should be aware of the possibility of finding fossils in the development area.
- If Palaeontological Heritage is uncovered during surface clearing and excavations the **Chance find Protocol** attached should be implemented immediately. These discoveries ought to be protected (if possible, *in situ*) and the ECO must report to SAHRA (Contact details: SAHRA, 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town. PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000, South Africa. Tel: 021 462 4502. Fax: +27 (0)21 462 4509. Web: www.sahra.org.za) so that correct mitigation (recording and collection) can be carry out by a paleontologist.

Before any fossil material can be collected from the development site, the specialist involved would need to apply for a collection permit from SAHRA. Fossil material must be housed in an official collection (museum or university), while all reports and fieldwork should meet the minimum standards for palaeontological impact studies proposed by SAHRA (2012). It is consequently recommended that no further palaeontological heritage studies, ground truthing and/or specialist mitigation are required pending the discovery of newly discovered fossils.

12 CHANCE FINDS PROTOCOL

The following procedure will only need to be followed if fossils are uncovered during excavation.

12.1 Background

A fossil is the naturally preserved remains (or traces) of plants or animals embedded in rock. These plants and animals lived in the geologic past millions of years ago. Fossils are extremely rare and irreplaceable. By studying fossils, it is possible to determine the environmental conditions that existed in a specific geographical area millions of years ago.

This informational document is intended for workmen and foremen on the construction site. It describes the actions to be taken when mining or construction activities accidentally uncovers fossil material.

It is the responsibility of the Environmental Site Officer (ESO) or site manager of the project to train the workmen and foremen in the procedure to follow when a fossil is accidentally uncovered. In the absence of the ESO, a member of the staff must be appointed to be responsible for the proper implementation of the Chance Find Protocol as not to compromise the conservation of fossil material.

12.2 Legislation

Cultural Heritage in South Africa (includes all heritage resources) is protected by the **National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) (NHRA).** According to Section 3 of the Act, all Heritage resources include **"all objects recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa, including archaeological and palaeontological objects and material, meteorites and rare geological specimens**".

Palaeontological heritage is unique and non-renewable and is protected by the NHRA and is the property of the State. It is thus the responsibility of the State to manage and conserve fossils on behalf of the citizens of South Africa. Palaeontological resources may not be excavated, broken, moved, or destroyed by any development without prior assessment and without a permit from the relevant heritage resources authority as per section 35 of the NHRA.

12.3 Chance Find Protocol

- If a chance find is made the person responsible for the find must immediately **stop working** and all work that could impact that finding must cease in the immediate vicinity of the find.
- The person who made the find must immediately **report** the find to his/her direct supervisor which in turn must report the find to his/her manager and the ESO or site manager. The ESO or site manager must report the find to the relevant Heritage Agency (South African Heritage Research Agency, SAHRA). (Contact details: SAHRA, 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town. PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000, South Africa. Tel: 021 462 4502. Fax: +27 (0)21 462 4509. Web: www.sahra.org.za). The information to the

Heritage Agency must include photographs of the find, from various angles, as well as the GPS co-ordinates.

- A preliminary report must be submitted to the Heritage Agency within **24 hours** of the find and must include the following: 1) date of the find; 2) a description of the discovery and a 3) description of the fossil and its context (depth and position of the fossil), GPS co-ordinates.
- Photographs (the more the better) of the discovery must be of high quality, in focus, accompanied by a scale. It is also important to have photographs of the vertical section (side) where the fossil was found.
- Upon receipt of the preliminary report, the Heritage Agency will inform the ESO (or site manager) whether a rescue excavation or rescue collection by a palaeontologist is necessary.
- The site must be secured to protect it from any further damage. **No attempt** should be made to remove material from their environment. The exposed finds must be stabilized and covered by a plastic sheet or sand bags. The Heritage agency will also be able to advise on the most suitable method of protection of the find.
- In the event that the fossil cannot be stabilized the fossil may be collected with extreme care by the ESO (site manager). Fossils finds must be stored in tissue paper and in an appropriate box while due care must be taken to remove all fossil material from the rescue site.
- Once Heritage Agency has issued the written authorization, the developer may continue with the development on the affected area.

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APPENDIX 1:

CURRICULUM VITAE

PROFESSION:	Palaeontologist
YEARS' EXPERIENCE:	30 years in Palaeontology
EDUCATION:	B.Sc Botany and Zoology, 1988
	University of the Orange Free State
	B. Sc (Hons) Zoology, 1991
	University of the Orange Free State
	Management Course, 1991
	University of the Orange Free State
	M. Sc. *Cum laude* (Zoology), 2009
	University of the Free State

Dissertation title: The postcranial skeleton of the Early Triassic non-mammalian Cynodont *Galesaurus planiceps*: implications for biology and lifestyle

MEMBERSHIP

Palaeontological Society of South Africa (PSSA) 2006-currently

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Part time Laboratory assistant	Department of Zoology & Entomology University of the Free State Zoology 1989-1992
Part time laboratory assistant	Department of Virology University of the Free State Zoology 1992
Research Assistant	National Museum, Bloemfontein 1993 – 1997
Principal Research Assistant and Collection Manager	National Museum, Bloemfontein 1998–2022

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