

SPECIALIST REPORT

**PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE
GOD'S WINDOW SKYWALK PROJECT ON PORTION 2 OF THE FARM LISBON
531KT & THE FARM DE HOUTBOSCH 503KT, GRASKOP, MPUMALANGA**

REPORT PREPARED FOR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) regarding archaeological and other cultural heritage resources was conducted on the footprint for the proposed God's Window Skywalk Project on the farms *De Houtbosch 503KT* and *portion 2 of the farm Lisbon 531KT*, Mpumalanga Province. The study area is situated on topographical map 1:50 000, 2430 DD GRASKOP, which falls within the Mpumalanga Province, under the jurisdiction of the Ehlanzeni district municipality, and Thaba Chweu local municipality.

Mapulana Canyon (Pty) Ltd, in partnership with the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), via a Public Private Partnership agreement proposes the development of a new tourist facility at God's Window, in the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon), near Graskop.

The National Heritage Resources Act, no 25 (1999), (NHRA), protects all heritage resources, which are classified as national estate. The NHRA stipulates that any person who intends to undertake a development, is subjected to the provisions of the Act.

The study revealed that no archaeological or cultural material of significance, or graves were observed during the survey, and based on the findings in this report, Adansonia Heritage Consultants, states that there are no reasons which may prevent the proposed project, to continue.

Disclaimer: *Although all possible care is taken to identify all sites of cultural significance during the investigation, it is possible that hidden or sub-surface sites could be overlooked during the study, Christine Rowe trading as Adansonia Heritage Consultants will not be held liable for such oversights or for costs incurred by the client as a result.*

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- 2) The technology described in any report;*
- 3) Recommendations delivered to the Client.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Rowe', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Christine Rowe
MARCH 2022

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A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE PROJECT

Adansonia Heritage Consultants were appointed by ZUTARI (Pty) Ltd., to conduct a phase 1 heritage impact assessment (HIA) on archaeological and other heritage resources on *the farms De Houtbosch 503KT and portion 2 of Lisbon 531KT* within the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, in the Ehlanzeni District near Graskop.

Mapulana Canyon (Pty) Ltd, in partnership with the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), via a Public Private Partnership agreement proposes the development of a Skywalk and tourist facility at God's Window, in the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon). The development will include a skywalk, a sky bridge, restaurants and dining areas, an auditorium, administrative offices, and the upgrading of existing walkways. ¹

The 5ha study area, which is situated to the north of Graskop, forms part of the scenic Mpumalanga Escarpment, on the Panorama tourism route. ² The land is under a land claim and a settlement agreement has been concluded between four Communal Property Associations (Pilgrim's Rest Development Trust, Moletele Communal Property Association, Setlhare Communal Property Association and Mahubahuba Bokone Communal Property Association), to allow communities and residents of nearby areas to derive economic benefit from the God's Window Skywalk Project. ³

A literature study, relevant to the study area was done, to determine whether any archaeological or heritage resources might be impacted upon by the proposed development (see maps 2 - 4). The site visit was conducted in March 2022.

The aim of this report is to source all relevant information on archaeological and heritage resources in the study area, and to advise the client on sensitive heritage areas and whether it is viable for the development to take place in terms of the specifications as set out in the

¹ ZUTARI: Background Information Document, E-mail Access: 2022-02-10.

² Rowe, C., A Phase 1 AIA/HIA for the Graskop Gorge Tourism Project on ptn 4 of the farm Graskop 564KT, June 2014.

³ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-02-10.

National Heritage Resources Act no., 25 of 1999 (NHRA). Recommendations for maximum conservation measures for any heritage resource will also be made. The study area is indicated in maps 2 - 6. Photographic evidence is in Appendix 2.

- This study forms part of an EIA, Consultant: ZUTARI Impact Engineered (Pty) Ltd, P.O. Box 74381, Lynnwood Ridge, 0040; Tel: 012 4272235; E-mail: Candice.Durr@zutari.com.
- Type of development: 5 ha, are earmarked for the God's Window Skywalk project on the farms *De Houtbosch 503KT & portion 2 of the farm Lisbon 531KT*, Mpumalanga Province.
- The site is currently zoned as: Nature Reserve / Tourism. ⁴
- Location of Province, Magisterial district / Local Authority and Property (farms): The area falls within the Mpumalanga Province under the jurisdiction of the Ehlanzeni district municipality and Thaba Chweu local municipality.
- Land owners: God's Window lies on land owned by the State: National Government of the Republic of South Africa (*De Houtbosch 503KT*), and Provincial Government of Mpumalanga (*portion 2 of the farm Lisbon 531KT*). ⁵

Please note that the project was previously approved but additional information was needed for amendments in the design concepts. ⁶ A Heritage Impact Assessment for the project was also done in August 2013, ⁷ and was approved by SAHRA on 23 March 2015 (Case ID 7111). ⁸ The study revealed no heritage resources within the proposed footprint.

Terms of reference: As specified by section 38 (3) of the NHRA, the following information is provided in this report.

- a) The identification and mapping of heritage resources where applicable;
- b) Assessment of significance of the resources;
- c) Assessment of the impact of the development;
- d) Evaluation of the impact of the development;
- e) Consultation with community members.
- f) Alternatives given to affected heritage resources by the development;

⁴ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-02-28.

⁵ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-02-10.

⁶ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-02-28.

⁷ SEF Ref 505201: Seliane M., Phase 1 Cultural HIA for the proposed Skywalk Project – God's Window, 2013.

⁸ SAHRA: Skywalk Project God's Window, Case ID 7111, Final Comment, 23 March 2015.

- g) Plans for measures of mitigation.

Legal requirements:

The legal context of the report is grounded in the National Heritage Resources Act no. 25, 1999, (NHRA), as well as the National Environmental Management Act (1998) (NEMA). The HIA is a specialist study which forms part of the Environmental Impact reporting process for application of the environmental authorization for the proposed project.

- **Section 38 of the NHRA**

This report constitutes a heritage impact assessment investigation linked to the environmental impact assessment required for the development. The proposed development is a listed activity in terms of Section 38 (1) of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA). Section 38 (2) of the NHRA requires the submission of a HIA report for authorisation purposes to the responsible heritage resources agency, (South African Heritage Resources Agency - SAHRA).

Heritage conservation and management in South Africa is governed by the NHRA and falls under the overall jurisdiction of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) and its provincial offices and counterparts.

Section 38 of the NHRA requires a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) to be conducted by an independent heritage management consultant, for the following development categories:

- Construction of a road, wall, power line, pipeline, canal or other linear form of development or barrier exceeding 300m in length;
- Construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length;
- Development or other activity that will change the character of a site -
 - exceeding 5000sq m;
 - involving three or more existing erven or subdivisions;
 - involving three or more erven or divisions that have been consolidated within the past 5 years;
 - rezoning of a site exceeding 10 000sq m;
 - the costs of which will exceed a sum set in terms of regulation by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority;
- Any other development category, public open space, squares, parks or recreation grounds.

In addition, the new EIA regulations promulgated in terms of NEMA, determine that any environmental report will include cultural (heritage) issues.

The end purpose of this report is to alert the client and interested and affected parties about existing heritage resources that may be affected by the proposed development, and to recommend mitigation measures aimed at reducing the risks of any adverse impacts on these heritage resources. Such measures could include the recording of any heritage buildings or structures older than 60 years prior to demolition, in terms of section 34 of the NHRA and also other sections of this act dealing with archaeological sites, buildings and graves.

The NHRA section 2 (xvi) states that a “heritage resource” means any place or object of cultural significance, and in section 2 (vi) that “cultural significance” means aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological value or significance.

Apart from a heritage report assisting a client to make informed development decisions, it also serves to provide the relevant heritage resources authority with the necessary data to perform their statutory duties under the NHRA. After evaluating the heritage scoping report, the heritage resources authority will decide on the status of the resource, whether the development may proceed as proposed or whether mitigation is acceptable, and whether the heritage resource require formal protection such as a Grade I, II or III resource, with relevant parties having to comply with all aspects pertaining to such grading.

- **Section 35 of the NHRA**

Section 35 (4) of the NHRA stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA, destroy, damage, excavate, alter or remove from its original position, or collect, any archaeological material or object. This section may apply to any significant archaeological sites that may be discovered. In the case of such chance finds, the heritage practitioner will assist in investigating the extent and significance of the finds and consult with an archaeologist about further action. This may entail removal of material after documenting the find or mapping of larger sections before destruction. This section does not apply since no archaeological material was found.

- **Section 36 of the NHRA**

Section 36 of the NHRA stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA,

destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years, which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority. This section may apply in case of the discovery of chance burials. No graves were identified during the survey.

- **Section 34 of the NHRA**

Section 34 of the NHRA stipulates that no person may alter, damage, destroy, relocate etc, any building or structure older than 60 years, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority. This section does not apply since no building / structure older than 60 years was identified.

- **Section 37 of the NHRA**

This section deals with public monuments and memorials but does not apply in this report.

- **NEMA**

The regulations in terms of Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (107/1998), provide for an assessment of development impacts on the cultural (heritage) and social environment and for specialist studies in this regard.

B. BACKGROUND TO ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF THE STUDY AREA

- **Literature review, museum databases & previous relevant impact assessments**

In order to place the Graskop area in an archaeological context, primary and secondary sources were consulted. Ethnographical and linguistic studies by early researchers such as Ziervogel and Van Warmelo shed light on the cultural groups living in the wider area since circa (ca) 1600. Historic and academic sources by Küsel, Meyer, Voight, Bergh, De Jongh, Evers, Myburgh, Thackeray and Van der Ryst were consulted, as well as historic sources by Makhura and Webb.

Primary sources were consulted from the Pilgrim's Rest Museum Archives for a background on the pre-history and history of the study area. The information centre in Graskop was helpful but had very little information on the history of the town. Apart from a few reports mentioned below, the author was not aware of any previous impact assessments in the direct study area.

Research has been done by the author on San rock art as well as Bantu speaking rock art sites on the Mpumalanga Escarpment area, of which several are recorded towards the north of

Graskop. None have been recorded in the direct vicinity of the God's Window study area.⁹

The 1:50 000 topographical map of GRASKOP 2430DD (1997) revealed no features of interest. It is indicated as natural woodland with a few existing buildings for the God's Window Viewpoint tourist attraction (see topo map 6 & Appendix 2).

Very little contemporary research has been done on prehistoric African settlements in the study area. Only one professionally excavated Early Iron Age site was executed, in the wider area namely the Plaston site near White River, dating ca 900 AD.¹⁰ The Lydenburg Head site, which was discovered by a school boy in the 1960's, dated to approximately 400 Anno Domini (AD).¹¹ The *Bushman Rock Shelter* was excavated in the 1970's near Ohrigstad.¹² Archaeological excavations dating to the Later Iron Age have been conducted in the Kruger National Park and in the Lydenburg area¹³ but none have been conducted to date directly within the study area. A stone walled settlement with terracing was recorded by C. van Wyk (Rowe) near Hazyview,¹⁴ as well as several others further west and north-west,¹⁵ outside the study area.

The Graskop area at the top of the escarpment was sparsely populated in the past. The area below the escarpment was however extensively and continuously inhabited since the 17th century, and the local people made use of animal footpaths to reach the top of the escarpment. One of these footpaths became the later Kowyn's Pass. The field survey, literature study and personal communication with specialists in the field revealed that this area was not rich in archaeological material or sites.

According to Bergh, there are no recorded sites that date from the Stone Age, or Iron Age (Early or Late) settlements. Two rock painting sites are indicated to the north of Graskop. It can be confirmed that no archaeological or rock art sites are present on the study area.¹⁶

⁹ PRMA: Information file 9/2.

¹⁰ M.M. Van der Ryst., Die Ystertydperk, in J.S. Bergh (red.), *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid Afrika: Die vier Noordelike Provinsies*. p. 97.

¹¹ M.M. Van der Ryst., Die Ystertydperk, in J.S. Bergh (red.), *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid Afrika: Die vier Noordelike Provinsies*. p. 97.

¹² E. Voight, *Guide to Archaeological sites in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal*, p. 110.

¹³ A. Pelsler 2014: Report on 1st phase of archaeological investigation of LIA stone walled sites, Lydenburg, Mpumalanga.

¹⁴ C. Van Wyk, *Inspection of Umbhaba Stone-walled settlement, Hazyview*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ PRMA: Information file 9/2.

¹⁶ J.S. Bergh, *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid-Afrika Die Vier Noordelike Provinsies*, pp. 4-7

Elizabeth Voight,'s *Guide to the Archaeological sites in the northern and eastern Transvaal*, revealed no significant archaeological sites in the study area. ¹⁷

The SAHRA database for archaeological and historical impact assessments was consulted and revealed no Archaeological Impact assessment reports in the direct vicinity of the study area.

The author was however involved in surveys in the direct area, such as:

- C. Van Wyk Rowe: 2007: Assessment of Historic Mining Structures for proposed demolition, at the Rock Window, Graskop – historic mining infrastructure.
- C. Van Wyk Rowe: 2008 HIA for the extension of plantation area and demolishing of structures (Latre type houses), Blyde Plantation, Graskop – recent forestry infrastructure.
- C. Van Wyk Rowe: 2008 HIA for structure / foundation for proposed rehabilitation of area, Lisbon Plantation, Graskop – historic foundation of diggers house.
- C. Van Wyk Rowe: 2014 Phase 1 AIA & HIA for the Graskop Gorge Tourism Project on portion 4 of the farm Graskop 564KT, Mpumalanga – no archaeological or heritage features were observed.
- C. Van Wyk Rowe: 2020: Phase 1 AIA / HIA for the Graskop Township development on the farm Graskop 564KT, Mpumalanga Province – only historical mining related features were observed.

Several early ethnographical and linguistic studies by early researchers such as D. Ziervogel and N.J. Van Warmelo, revealed that the wider area was inhabited by Eastern Sotho groups (Pulana, Kutswe and Pai), and the Tsonga (Nhlanganu and Tšhangana), from before the 18th century.^{18 19} (See map 1). See Appendix 3 for a short History and overview of the Mapulana people in the study area.

The whole district is divided in two, with the Drakensberg Escarpment (in which the study area is situated), and the Lowveld towards the east. Today, we found that the boundaries of groups are intersected and overlapping.²⁰ Languages such as Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Nhlanganu, Nkuna, sePedi, hiPau and seRôka, are commonly spoken throughout this area.²¹

¹⁷ E. Voight, *Guide to Archaeological sites in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal*.

¹⁸ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*. pp. 90-92 & 111.

¹⁹ H. S. Webb, *The Native Inhabitants of the Southern Lowveld, in Lowveld Regional Development Association, The South-Eastern Transvaal Lowveld*. p.16.

²⁰ N.J. van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, p. 51.

²¹ M. De Jongh (ed)., *Swatini*, p. 21.

When the Swazi began to expand northwards, they forced the local inhabitants out of Swaziland, or absorbed them.²² There is evidence of resistance, but the Eastern Sotho groups who lived in the northern parts of Swaziland, moved mainly northwards.²³ This appeared to have taken place towards the end of the 18th century,²⁴ when these groups fled from Swaziland to areas such as Nelspruit, Bushbuckridge, Klaserie, Blyde River and Komatipoort.²⁵

Several circular stone-walled complexes and terraces as well as graves have been recorded in the vicinity of Hazyview ²⁶, Bushbuckridge, Graskop and Sabie, clay potsherds and upper as well as lower grinding stones, are scattered at most of the sites. ²⁷ Many of these occur in caves as a result of the Swazi attacks on the smaller groups. ²⁸

Van Warmelo based his 1935 survey of *Bantu Tribes of South Africa* on the number of taxpayers in an area. The survey does not include the extended households of each taxpayer, so it was impossible to actually indicate the number of people living in one area. ²⁹ The only early trade route mentioned, which crossed this section, was a footpath used by the African groups from Delagoa Bay towards Bushbuckridge (Magashulaskraal), along the Sabie River, up the Escarpment, and further north to the Soutpansberg. ³⁰ There is however, no physical evidence left of this particular early route, but it is most likely that the route went up the Escarpment via *Kowyn's Pass*.

Eastern Sotho group: The Pai

Van Warmelo identified the groups in northern Swaziland and the Pilgrim's Rest district before 1886, as Eastern Sotho (Pulana, Pai and Kutswe). According to Von Wielligh, the **Pai** occupied the area as far south as the Komati River (umLumati). Most of the younger generation has adopted the Swazi language. ³¹

²² A.C. Myburgh, *The Tribes of Barberton District*, p. 10.

²³ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*. p. 111.

²⁴ H. S. Webb, The Native Inhabitants of the Southern Lowveld, in *Lowveld Regional Development Association, The South-Eastern Transvaal Lowveld*. p. 14

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁶ PRMA: Information file 9/2.

²⁷ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, p. 3.

²⁸ C. Rowe, 2009: Heritage Management of Archaeological, Historical and Industrial resources on the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve, MA dissertation. Pretoria: UP.

²⁹ N.J. van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, p.9.

³⁰ L. Changuion & J.S. Bergh, Swart gemeenskappe voor die koms van die blankes, in *J.S. Bergh (red).*, *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid Afrika: Die vier Noordelike Provinsies*. p. 104.

³¹ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, pp. 3-5.

The Swazi constantly attacked the Eastern Sotho groups during the nineteenth century. The Pai fled to the caves in the mountains near MacMac (west of Graskop), while some of them (which were subjugated by a Swazi leader) fled from *Mswazi* in about 1853 to Sekukuniland (Steelpoort area), but decided to turn back towards their country along the Sabie River (1882). By this time, Europeans had already settled in this area when gold was discovered in 1873, near Graskop.³²

Eastern Sotho group: The Pulana

The history of the **Pulana** goes back to the Barberton area from where they trekked via Krokodilpoort (Nelspruit district) to settle north-east of Pretoriuskop. When the Swazi invaded them, they moved on and split up under several chieftainships,³³ of whom chief Kobêng (after which Kowyns' Pass south of Graskop, was named), is well-known in the area's history.

The Pulana roughly lived in the following areas: north of the Crocodile River, west of the western boundary of the Kruger National Park as far north as its crossing the Sabie River, south of the Sabie River until its cutting through the main road from Pretoriuskop to Bushbuckridge, west of this road as far as Klaserie, south of a line drawn from Klaserie to the confluence of the Blyde and Orighstad rivers, east of the Blyde River. This large area is divided in two by the main road from Pilgrim's Rest and Graskop to Bushbuckridge. This road was since ancient times the only connection between the Lowveld and Escarpment, and became known as "Kowyns' Pass".³⁴ The majority of Pulana lived to the north of this line (mainly below the Escarpment), while south of this line the Pulana are scattered in groups into which are wedged Pai groups on both sides of the Sabie River, and Swazi peoples in the south, and south-eastern portions.^{35 36} It was the Pulana clans who, under chief Maripi Mashile, defeated the Swazi at Mariepskop in the Blyde River Canyon, ca 1864 (north of Graskop).³⁷

Eastern Sotho group: The Kutswe

The **Kutswe** trekked from the northern parts of Swaziland northwards as a result of pressure from the Swazi in the south.³⁸ The Kutswe settled north-east of the present Nelspruit at a river

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³⁴ M. De Jongh, (ed)., *Swatini*, p. 21.

³⁵ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, p. 107.

³⁶ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*. p. 111.

³⁷ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, p. 107.

³⁸ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, p. 110.

called Kutswe (Gutshwa)³⁹ from where they got their present name. From here they moved on and settled at various places, and ruins of their kraals are scattered from Pretoriuskop, Hazyview (Phabeni) as well as on the farms Welgevonden 364, Lothian 258, Boschhoek 47, Sandford 46, Culcutta 51 and Oakley 262 in the Bushbuckridge area,⁴⁰ all situated in the Lowveld. They occupied additional areas between White River and Sabie, and had sufficient influence amongst the Pai during the early 20th century, to establish authority over more than 2000 individuals living on farms on both sides of the Sabie River from the town of Sabie as far as the main road from White River to Bushbuckridge.⁴¹ They had chief jurisdiction over the following farms near Bushbuckridge: Oakley 262, Calcutta 51, Madras 50, Alexandria 251, Cork 60 and Ronoldsey 273. They intermarried with Nhlangu (Shangaan), Swazi and Pai.^{42 43}

Tsonga groups: The Nhlangu and Tshangana

The Nhlangu and Tshangana (also generally known as the Shangaan-Tsonga)⁴⁴ form part of the larger Tsonga group of which the original group occupied the whole of Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa), and it has been recorded that by 1554, they were already living around the Delagoa Bay area (Maputo).⁴⁵ They fled from the onslaughts of the Zulu (Nguni) nation from the Natal area and great numbers of emigrants sought safety in the "Transvaal" as recently as the 19th century, especially in the greater Pilgrim's Rest district. The Tsonga also moved west from Mozambique into the "Transvaal". They have never formed large powerful tribes but were mostly always subdivided into loosely-knit units, and absorbed under the protection of whichever chief would give them land.⁴⁶ They were originally of Nguni origin.⁴⁷ The term "Shangaan" is commonly employed to refer to all members of the Tsonga division.⁴⁸ The **Nhlangu** occupied the Lowveld area in their efforts to escape the Zulu raids during 1835-1840. They lived side by side with the Tshangana, and the differences between the two are inconsiderable. They have mixed extensively with other tribes.⁴⁹

³⁹ T. Makhura, Early Inhabitants, in *Delius, P. (ed.), Mpumalanga: History and heritage*. p.105.

⁴⁰ D. Ziervogel, *The Eastern Sotho, A Tribal, Historical and Linguistic Survey*, p. 110.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ M. De Jongh (ed.), *Swatini*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ N.J. Van Warmelo, Grouping and Ethnic History, in *Schapera I., The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa. An Ethnographical survey*, p. 55.

⁴⁶ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, pp. 90-91.

⁴⁷ N.J. Van Warmelo, Grouping and Ethnic History, in *Schapera I., The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa. An Ethnographical survey*, p. 55.

⁴⁸ N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, p. 92

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*.pp. 91-92.

was virtually uninhabited.⁵²

During the earlier part of the 19th century, the Swazi continually raided the MaPulana and carried off their cattle. In the 1860's the MaPulana, under their Chief Mariep, annihilated the Swazi impis in a fierce battle at what is now known as Mariepskop (to the north of Graskop).⁵³

In the 1950's, the Graskop area was a farm owned by Abel Erasmus, the Chief Native Commissioner for the Lydenburg District, who was involved in hunting, prospecting and imposing law and order in the area. Following the discovery of gold at Mac Mac, the farm Graskop was bought from Abel Erasmus by the Government of the Republic of Transvaal. The purpose was to establish a Government Township from the newly discovered goldfield. The town was never proclaimed as most of the diggers left the area in favor of the new discovery of gold in Pilgrim's Rest (1873).⁵⁴ Graskop is also famous for *Jock of the Bushveld*, which dates between 1885 and 1887. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick established his camp at Paradise berg (in Graskop) and described his experiences of this area in his book *Jock of the Bushveld*.⁵⁵

The shortest route from Graskop to the Lowveld was via the Kowyn's Pass. (Kowyn's Pass is approximately 4km south of the study area). In the 1840's, access to the Lowveld was by means of an animal track on land under control of a local chief, Koveni, translated into Afrikaans as Kowyn. Chief Kowyn had his settlement halfway down the pass and his people used this track to reach the top of the Escarpment.⁵⁶ In 1902, Max Carl Gustav Liebnitz arrived on the farm Graskop and erected a trading store, hotel and a house at the top of Kowyn's Pass. He soon realized that a road to carry wagons was essential for his business. He turned the existing animal track into the first, *Kowyn's Pass*. The pass had a gradient of, in some places 1 in 3. The heavier wagons required three spans of oxen to get up the steeper sections. Going down was not much easier as huge branches had to be attached to the wagons to assist with braking. The present road is the third, and was opened in 1959. Due to the high rainfall on the escarpment (Graskop being the highest rainfall area in South Africa), dangerous rock falls had been common. Engineers incorporated a Swiss design to create a more protected passage

⁵² Mailcoach Organising Committee. *Graskop – Van Riebeeck Festival*, 1952, p. 23.

⁵³ Mailcoach Organising Committee. *Graskop – Van Riebeeck Festival*, 1952, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Southey, F., (ed), *The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Southey, F., (ed), *The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Mailcoach Organising Committee. *Graskop – Van Riebeeck Festival*, 1952, p. 9.

between the Highveld and the Lowveld, which was completed in 1980.⁵⁷

In 1910, the newly formed government of the Union of South Africa, decided to build a railway line from Nelspruit to the farm Graskop, the nearest place to the goldfields of Pilgrim's Rest. The station was called Graskop and the official date for the establishment of Graskop was 12 September 1914.⁵⁸

R.W. Richardson introduced the Zeederberg Coach Service between Graskop railway station and Pilgrim's Rest. He also opened the first garage and motor agency in Graskop. Together with Max Liebnitz, he served on the first Health Committee of Graskop. A.P. Cartwright in his book "Valley of Gold" refers to a "Gold Rush" in 1908, when the Department of Mines cancelled the concession on the farm Graskop and proclaimed the area as a goldfield, to allow syndicates and individual diggers the opportunity to peg new claims.⁵⁹

Gods Window which is approximately 5km north of Graskop, forms part of the Mpumalanga Drakensberg Escarpment, which is on average 1000m high and stretches from the Blyde River Canyon in the north (roughly from the Strijdom Tunnels), to Graskop, and Sabie in the south. It forms the boundary between the grassy Highveld plateau and the bushveld or Lowveld. The entire area is interspersed with plantations, forests, rivers, waterfalls and gorges, resulting in spectacular scenery of incredible beauty which makes it a popular tourist destination.⁶⁰

Graskop is still today the centre of mining, forestry and timber-milling industries.⁶¹

C. DESCRIPTION OF AREA TO BE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENT

The proposed GOD'S WINDOW SKYWALK PROJECT is situated on *the farms De Houtbosch 503KT & portion 2 of the farm Lisbon 531KT*, and is approximately 5ha in extent. God's Window is situated on the ridge of the Motlatse Canyon (former Blyde River Canyon), and is operating for many years as a key tourist attraction in the Graskop area, and forms part of the Panorama Tourist Route (figures 1 & 12). The area consists mainly of natural woodland (figures 3 & 4), with historically disturbed sections such as existing infrastructure, a parking area with

⁵⁷ Southey, F., (ed), The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook, p. 14.

⁵⁸ Southey, F., (ed), The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Southey, F., (ed), The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Southey, F., (ed), The Silver Spoon Panorama Handbook, p. 1.

⁶¹ H. S. Webb, The Native Inhabitants of the Southern Lowveld, *in Lowveld Regional Development Association, The South-Eastern Transvaal Lowveld.* p.

ablution facilities and stalls, as well as concrete walkways to the various viewpoints (see Appendix 2, Photographic documentation). The previous HIA conducted by Ms. Seliane in 2013, has also indicated the disturbed section of the project site.⁶² The circular road R534, forms the north-western boundary of the project site (see map 2).



MAP 2: Google image of the study area, as well as the historically disturbed section which includes the parking area.

The proposed development, will focus on disturbed as well as natural sections (figures 2, 4-8). The existing concrete walkways will be upgraded⁶³ (figures 3, 9-11) (see maps 2 - 4).

The escarpment consists mainly of North-eastern Mountain Grassland with Afromontane Forest along the highest mountains. The altitude is over 1500m above sea level while the rainfall varies from 900-1600mm per annum with a few places receiving over 2000mm annually. Mist provides additional essential moisture. The Graskop area consists essentially of open grassland with rocky patches, wetlands and dense indigenous forests.⁶⁴

⁶² SEF Ref 505201: Seliane M., Phase 1 Cultural HIA for the proposed Skywalk Project – God's Window, 2013, p. 6, Fig. 2.

⁶³ ZUTARI: Background Information Document, E-mail Access: 2022-02-10, p. 2.

⁶⁴ J. Onderstall, *Wild Flower Guide*, p. xxvi.



MAP 3: The layout plan of the proposed God’s Window Skywalk concept (Image provided by ZUTARI (Pty), Ltd. ⁶⁵ Boogertman & Partners Architects). The red and yellow squares indicate the proposed footprint for the project.

MAP 3:

- The section in red is the entrance and existing parking area at the God’s Window viewpoint site, including stalls and ablution facilities (figures 2, 5-6).
- The section in yellow is the area between the existing parking area and the viewpoint. It consists mainly of natural vegetation and constructed walkways (figures 7 – 8 & 9).

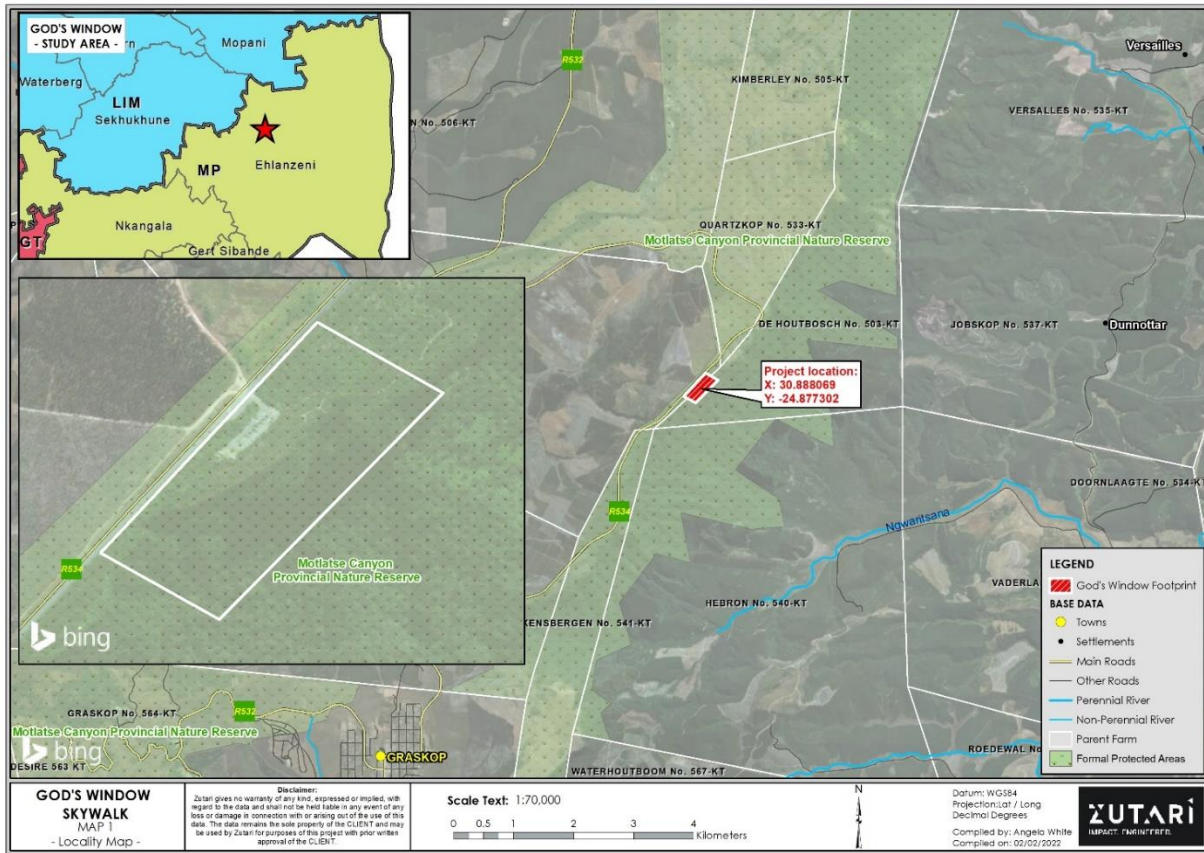
⁶⁵ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-01-20 & 28.



MAP 4: Architectural concept drawings of the side views of the proposed Skywalk project (Image provided by Zutari (Pty) Ltd - Boogertman & Partners Architects, Design drawing for the God's Window Skywalk project, Access: e-mail Zutari (Candice Durr), 2022-02-28).

D. LOCALITY

The study area (God's Window), is situated approximately 5km north of Graskop, on the circular road R534, which is accessed from the R532 Provincial Road between Graskop and Bourke's Luck. The area is surrounded by natural grassland as well as Komatiland Forests plantations. (See maps 2, 5 & 6).



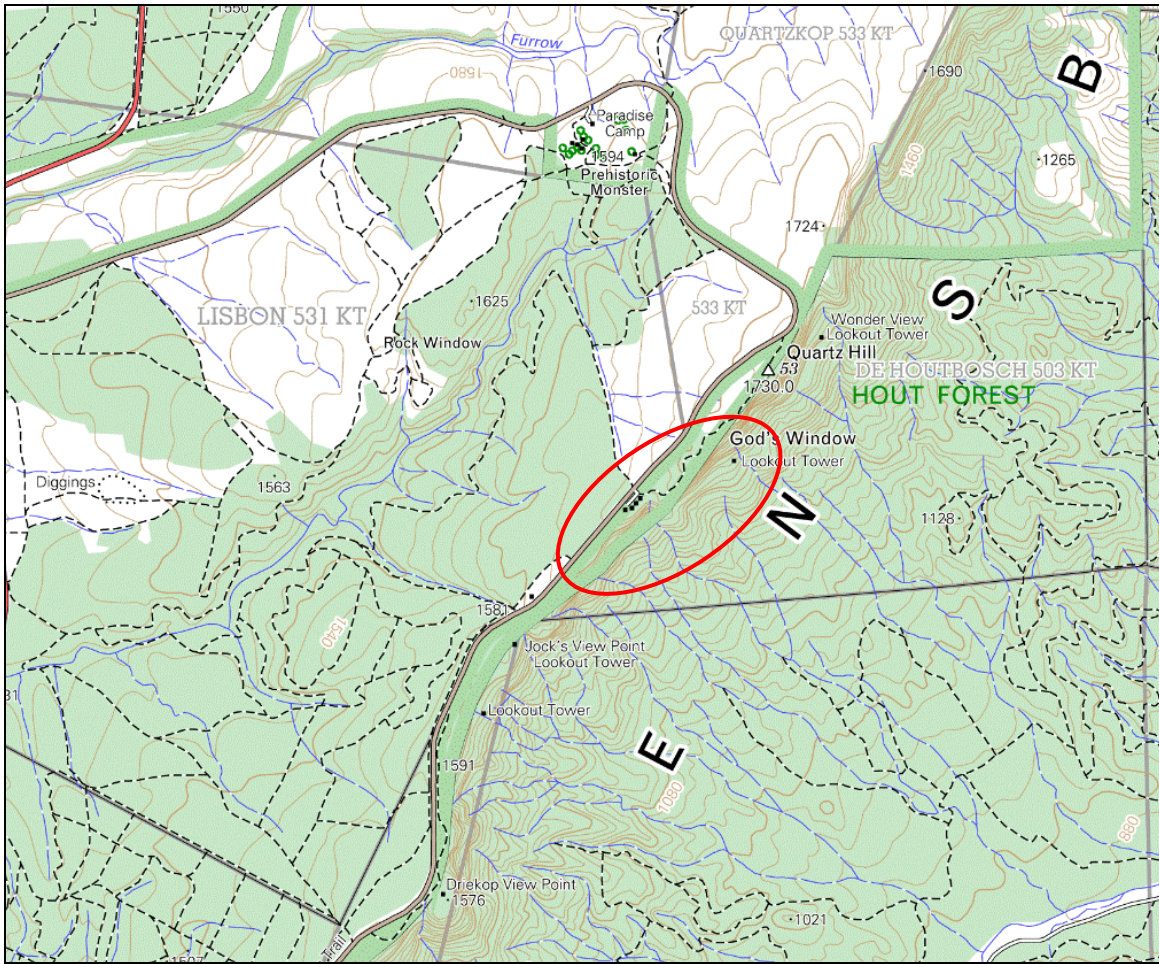
MAP 5: The location of the God's Window Skywalk project site within the wider context. Map provided by ZUTARI (Pty) Ltd. ⁶⁶

- **Description of methodology:**

In order to reach a comprehensive conclusion regarding the cultural heritage resources in the study area, the following methods were used:

- The desktop study consists mainly of archival sources studied on distribution patterns of early African groups who settled in the area since the 17th century, and which have been observed in past and present ethnographical research and studies.

⁶⁶ ZUTARI: Background Information Document, E-mail Access: 2022-02-10.



MAP 6: Topographical Map 1:50000: 2430 DD GRASKOP - 1997. The oval indicates the study area, which is to the east of the access road.

- Literary sources, books and government publications, which were available on the subject, have been consulted, in order to establish relevant information.
- Several specialists currently working in the field of anthropology and archaeology have also been consulted on the subject.
 - Archival sources consulted: Pilgrim's Rest Museum Archives (PRMA);
 - Literary sources: A number of books and government publications about prehistory and history of the area were consulted, and revealed valuable information;
 - The survey was conducted with two people over one day.
- Local community members and inhabitants concerned with the history of Graskop, were consulted throughout the survey.
- Visibility in the footprint for the proposed development was good as this section has

already been disturbed (see map historically disturbed), and this is the focus of the Skywalk concept plan. The rest of the property was accessed by existing footpaths, but most of the remaining areas were thickly forested and access away from the walkways, was difficult.

- The relevant data was located with a GPS instrument (Garmin Etrex) datum WGS 84, and plotted. Co-ordinates were within 4-6 meters of identified sites.
- Evaluation of the resources which might be impacted upon by the footprint, was done within the framework provided by the National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 (1999);
- Personal communication with relevant stakeholders on the specific study area, were held.⁶⁷
- **GPS-Co-ordinates of the study area: General co-ordinates of the project site:**

GOD'S WINDOW PROJECT SITE		
Latitude	Longitude	Elevation
S24° 52' 37.45"	E30° 53' 16.32"	1656m

E. DESCRIPTION OF IDENTIFIED SITES

The God's Window project site, which is earmarked for the proposed Skywalk development, will concentrate on the existing disturbed sections, and construction will take place within this footprint.⁶⁸ The small section between the existing parking area and the main viewpoint, which consist of fynbos / grassland, will be developed with the main building (see maps 3 & 4). The existing concrete pathways will be upgraded, but will not be expanded upon.⁶⁹ The project site was investigated for all possible heritage related features which might fall within the proposed God's Window Skywalk footprint. Visibility in the footprint for the proposed development was good as this section has already been disturbed (see map 3). The rest of the property was accessed by existing pathways, but most of the remaining areas were thickly forested and access was difficult (no impact is proposed for this section).

The footprint for the God's Window Skywalk project had a Low sensitivity in terms of archaeological and cultural heritage,⁷⁰ and no archaeological, cultural or historical remains, or graves were identified during the site survey.

⁶⁷ Personal communication: R. Reinders, Pilgrim's Rest Museum, 2020-02-16.

⁶⁸ ZUTARI: Background Information Document, E-mail Access: 2022-02-10, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Personal communication: EAP (ZUTARI), Candice Durr, E-mail access: 2022-02-07.

⁷⁰ Candice Durr: Screening Report for the God's Window Skywalk, 2022, Access: 2022-02-10, p. 13.

F. DISCUSSION ON THE FOOTPRINT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

<i>ACT</i>	<i>COMPONENT</i>	<i>IMPLICATION</i>	<i>RELEVANCE</i>	<i>COMPLIANCE</i>
NHRA	S 34	Impact on buildings and structures older than 60 years	None present	None
NHRA	S35	Impacts on archaeological and heritage resources	None present	None
NHRA	S36	Impact on graves	None present	None
NHRA	S37	Impact on public monuments	None present	None
NHRA	S38	Developments requiring an HIA	Development is a listed activity	HIA
NEMA	EIA regulations	Activities requiring an EIA	Development is subject to an EIA	HIA is part of EIA

- Summarised identification and cultural significance assessment of affected heritage resources:** (Standardized set of conventions used to assess the impact of projects on individual heritage features).

Context		
Urban environmental context	No	God's Window is 5km north of the town of Graskop
Rural environmental context	No	-
Natural environmental context	Yes	Part of the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon)
Formal protection (NHRA)		
(S. 28) Is the property part of a protected area?	Yes	Part of the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon)
(S. 31) Is the property part of a heritage area?	No	-
Other		
Is the property near to or visible from any protected heritage sites	Yes	Part of the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon)
Is the property part of a conservation area of special area in terms of the Zoning scheme?	No	Nature Reserve / Tourism
Does the site form part of a historical settlement or townscape?	No	-
Does the site form part of a rural cultural landscape?	No	-
Does the site form part of a natural landscape of cultural significance?	No	-

Context		
Is the site adjacent to a scenic route?	Yes	Part of the Panorama scenic route
Is the property within or adjacent to any other area which has special environmental or heritage protection?	Yes	Part of the Motlatse Canyon Nature Reserve (Blyde Canyon)
Does the general context or any adjoining properties have cultural significance?	No	-

Property features and characteristics		
Have there been any previous development impacts on the property?	Yes	God's Window Viewpoint and tourist attraction has been in operation for several years with existing infrastructure
Are there any significant landscape features on the property?	Yes	Highest point and spectacular viewpoint from the Escarpment to the Lowveld
Does the property have any rocky outcrops on it?	No	-
Does the property have any fresh water sources (springs, streams, rivers) on or alongside it?	Yes	Drainage lines

Heritage resources on the property		
Formal protection (NHRA)		
National heritage sites (S. 27)	No	-
Provincial heritage sites (S. 27)	No	-
Provincial protection (S. 29)	No	-
Place listed in heritage register (S. 30)	No	-
General protection (NHRA)		
Structures older than 60 years (S. 34)	No	-
Archaeological site or material (S. 35)	No	-
Graves or burial grounds (S. 36)	No	-
Public monuments or memorials (S. 37)	No	-
Other		
Any heritage resource identified in a heritage survey (author / date / grading)	No	-
Any other heritage resources (describe)	No	-

NHRA S (3)2 Heritage resource category	ELE-MENTS	INDICATORS OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE										RISK
		Historical	Rare	Scientific	Typical	Technological	Aesthetic	Person / community	Landmark	Material condition	Sustainability	
Buildings / structures of cultural significance	None	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Areas attached to oral traditions / intangible heritage	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Historical settlement / townscapes	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscape of cultural significance	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Archaeological sites	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grave / burial grounds	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Areas of significance related to labour history	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Movable objects	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

- Summarised recommended impact management interventions

NHRA S (3)2 Heritage resource category	SITE	IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE Cultural significance rating		Impact management	Motivation
		Cultural significance	Impact significance		
Buildings / structures of cultural significance	None	None	None	-	-
Areas attached to oral traditions / intangible heritage	No	None	None	-	-
Historical settlement/ townscape	No	None	None	-	-
Landscape of cultural significance	No	None	None	-	-
Archaeological sites	No	None	None	-	-
Grave / burial grounds	No	None	None	-	-
Areas of significance related to labour history	No	None	None	-	-
Movable objects	No	None	None	-	-

ACT	COMPO-NENT	IMPLICATION	RELEVANCE	COMPLIANCE
NHRA	S 34	Impact on buildings and structures older than 60 years	None present	None
NHRA	S35	Impacts on archaeological heritage resources	None present	None
NHRA	S36	Impact on graves	None present	None
NHRA	S37	Impact on public monuments	None present	None
NHRA	S38	Developments requiring an HIA	Development is a listed activity	Full HIA
NEMA	EIA regulations	Activities requiring an EIA	Development is subject to an EIA	HIA is part of EIA

G. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE & EVALUATION OF HERITAGE RESOURCES IN THE STUDY AREA

Section 38 of the NHRA, rates all heritage resources into National, Provincial or Local significance, and proposals in terms of the above is made for all identified heritage features.

• Evaluation methods

Site significance is important to establish the measure of mitigation and / or management of the resources. Sites are evaluated as *HIGH (National importance)*, *MEDIUM (Provincial importance or LOW, (local importance)*, as specified in the NHRA. It is explained as follows:

• National Heritage Resources Act

The National Heritage Resources Act no. 25, 1999 (NHRA) aims to promote good management of the national estate, and to enable and encourage communities to conserve their legacy so that it may be bequeathed to future generations. Heritage is unique and it cannot be renewed, and contributes to redressing past inequities.⁷¹ It promotes previously neglected research areas of which the study area is in crucial need of.

All archaeological and other cultural heritage resources are evaluated according to the NHRA, section 3(3). A place or object is considered to be part of the national estate if it has cultural significance or other special value in terms of:

- (a) its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history;
- (c) its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- (g) its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
- (h) its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in the history of South Africa;⁷²

Field Rating:

Please note that no archaeological / heritage features of significance, or graves were identified during the survey, within the study area. A memorial cross which was mentioned in the 2013 HIA, is no longer visible.⁷³

⁷¹ National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. p. 2.

⁷² National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. pp. 12-14

⁷³ SEF Ref 505201: Seliane M., Phase 1 Cultural HIA for the proposed Skywalk Project – God's Window, 2013.

H. RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological / heritage features of significance or graves were identified in the project area, and from an archaeological and heritage perspective, Adansonia Heritage Consultants have no reason to prevent the proposed God's Window Skywalk development to continue.

I. CONCLUSION

Archaeological material or graves are not always visible during a field survey and therefore some significant material may only be revealed during construction activities. It is therefore recommended that the developers be made aware of this possibility and when human remains, clay or ceramic pottery etc. are observed, a qualified archaeologist must be notified and an assessment be done. Further research might be necessary in this regard for which the developer will be responsible.

Adansonia Heritage Consultants cannot be held responsible for any archaeological material or graves which were not located during the survey.

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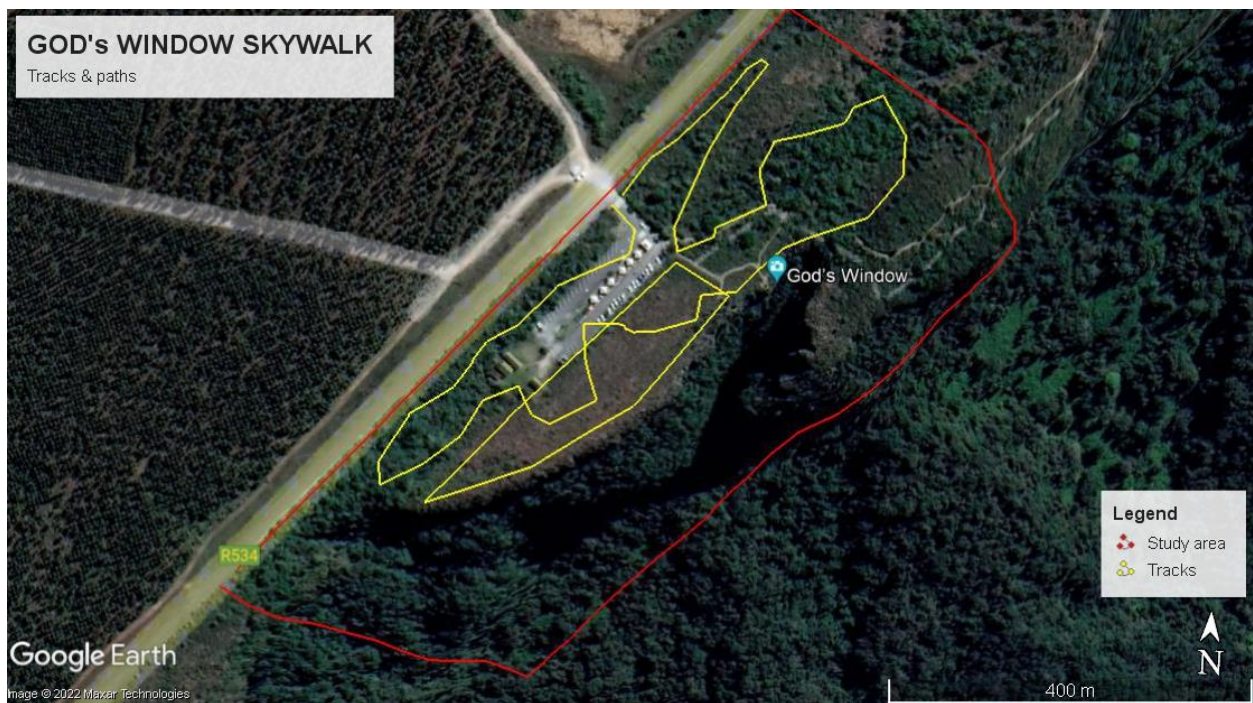
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APPENDIX 1: Tracks used during the survey



Tracks and paths used during the survey.