

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(Historical component)

Sidwadeni River, Mthatha and Mngazi River Access Roads and Bridges



(Photo: J Bennie)

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This document presents the historical component of the Heritage Impact Assessment assessing a new access road at Mthatha, Sidwadeni River crossing and a road and bridge at the Mngazi River on the R 61 in the Eastern Cape Province.

SUMMARY

The historical report follows the minimum standard guidelines required by the South African Heritage Resources Agency.

Proposal

- To conduct a survey on the location of two access roads and bridges, one on the outskirts of Mthatha and the other adjoining the Mngazi River, both on the R61, Eastern Cape
- To assess the significance and impact on these localities

The survey

The survey was conducted to establish whether there are any remaining historical structures more than 60 years old on the proposed sites of

- i) a new route off the R61 which is intended to align with the existing Bernard Schultz Road
- ii) a second access road to be provided to the landowner of Remainder of Erf 861, Mthatha, Ms Makaluza
- iii) a new bridge and access road over the Mngazi River.

The first two sites are approximately one kilometre from Mthatha on the R61 and the third is also on the R61 where the bridge crosses the Mngazi River approximately 70km from Mthatha and 30km from the coast. Both sites are covered in light bush and grass and have previously been disturbed by the construction of gravel roads and informal paths. The site of the access road to the homestead on the R61 appears to include some wetland area. No graveyards or informal graves were found in the preliminary survey.

Cultural sensitivity

As far as can be gauged no culturally sensitive pre-18th century artefacts have been found in the zone although oral history (not required in this study) might show that different groups (such as Early, Middle and Stone Age man, San, Khoekhoen and Black Xhosa speaking peoples) once lived in this area.

Recommendations

1. The South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) or Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resource Agency permit committee (ECPHRA) needs to be informed, and a permit issued, if any significant structures, buildings, graves, walls or historic trees older than 60 years are to be altered, cleared or demolished on the project sites.
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2. If any unusual or sensitive material is found when excavating the site, work should stop immediately until a proper investigation is launched by SAHRA, an archaeologist and/or the historian.
3. Development must not occur within 10 -15m of any informal or designated graveyards or burial sites. It would appear from oral history and consultations that no graves occur in the proposed Sidwadeni River area, some of it being wetland.

4. Although not a requirement of this study, in the future research into local African and Khoi oral history needs to be undertaken and recorded.
5. The current owner, Ms Makaluza, of the homestead Remainder of Erf 861, Mthatha on the R61 needs to be fully consulted regarding the implications of a new approach and access road from an opposite direction over her privately owned land.

Project Information

Status

The historical component is part of the HIA

Type:

(From the Background Information Document)

The project will include access roads and associated bridges for the river crossings over the Sidwadeni and Mngazi Rivers. A new access road and bridge needs to be built for the owner of the house adjoining the R 61 just outside Mthatha. It is intended that this will be an extension of Bernard Schultz Road. It should be noted that there is a large wetland area in the proposed vicinity. Two river crossings will be involved as in addition a new access road and river crossing for the homeowner will need to be built. The existing gravel access road joining the R61 will be re-aligned according to the attached files.

At the Mngazi River a new bridge will be constructed and this will link up with the existing gravel access roads to the east of the river.

The historical component of the Heritage Impact Assessment was undertaken for Environmental Impact Management Services (Pty) Ltd in January 2013 complying with new requirements.

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1. National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act 25 of 1999)

The National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (No 25 of 1999) makes provision for a compulsory Heritage Impact Assessment when an area exceeding 5000 m² is to be developed.

Section 34 (1) of the Act stipulates that no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

Section 36 of the Act relates to burial grounds and graves and stipulates that SAHRA must conserve burial grounds and graves after identifying and recording those which appear to be of cultural significance. Any memorials erected by them must be maintained. No person may destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position any burial ground or grave older than 60 years situated outside a formal cemetery, or use any excavation equipment that assists in the detection and recovery of metals.

Section 38 (3) a-g of the South African Heritage Resources Act sets out the minimum requirements of a heritage impact assessment, which include inter alia:

- Identification and mapping
- Assessment of significance
- Assessment of potential impacts

Section 38 of the Act clearly indicates that any person constructing a road or similar linear development exceeding 300m in length, the construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m or any development or other activity which will change the character of the site, is required to notify the responsible local heritage resources authority or the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). They in turn will advise whether an impact assessment report is needed prior to development.

2. Introduction and Terms of Reference

Mrs Jenny Bennie was approached by G P Kriel of Environmental Management Impact Services (Pty) Ltd to determine and assess whether new access roads relating to the stipulated sites at Mthatha and Mngazi River would affect either any structures older than 60 years, or any formal graves or informal burial sites. An assessment of the sensitivity and significance of the sites will be considered and the impact on the local communities will be evaluated.

The area under review falls in the eastern section of the Eastern Cape. The wider territory lies between the Kei River and the Kwa-Zulu Natal border, the Drakensberg and the Indian Ocean. The countryside consists of green rolling hills, fertile valleys and many rivers and streams. It is home to the Thembu and Mpondo peoples, part of the amaXhosa nation, who in turn comprise the Nguni.

The first site reviewed is close to Mthatha and is characterised by peri-urban development with an informal gravel access road adjoining the R61. The second section, on the R61, encompasses rural settlements and scattered communities who are reliant on subsistence farming. The Mngazi River is part of the largely natural river systems in the area.



Fig 1 Locality map showing both sites



Mthatha site



Mngazi site on R61

3. Approach and methodology

The objective of this investigation is to assess the possible historical significance of any structures or the likelihood of finding informal graves in the area.

A four phase approach to heritage sites requires understanding the site; assessing the cultural significance; assessing its vulnerability and proposing relevant suitable management policies if necessary.

It is crucial to undertake historical research and analysis to prevent actions which could be detrimental to the significance of the sites; and also to provide a framework in which a future conservation plan could be put forward if deemed necessary.

Sites under review

Two sites are earmarked for new access roads, crossings and a bridge and are pictured below.

SITE 1

Mthatha site: Sidwadeni River

The area falls in a triangular section between the main R61 and a gravel road. Exotic and indigenous bush and grasses cover the ground, which has also been used for dumping rubble. There appeared to be no man-made structures in the vicinity, besides a weir.



Fig. 4 View along the R61 outside Mthatha looking east



Fig 5 View on the opposite side of the R61, from the site looking south-west

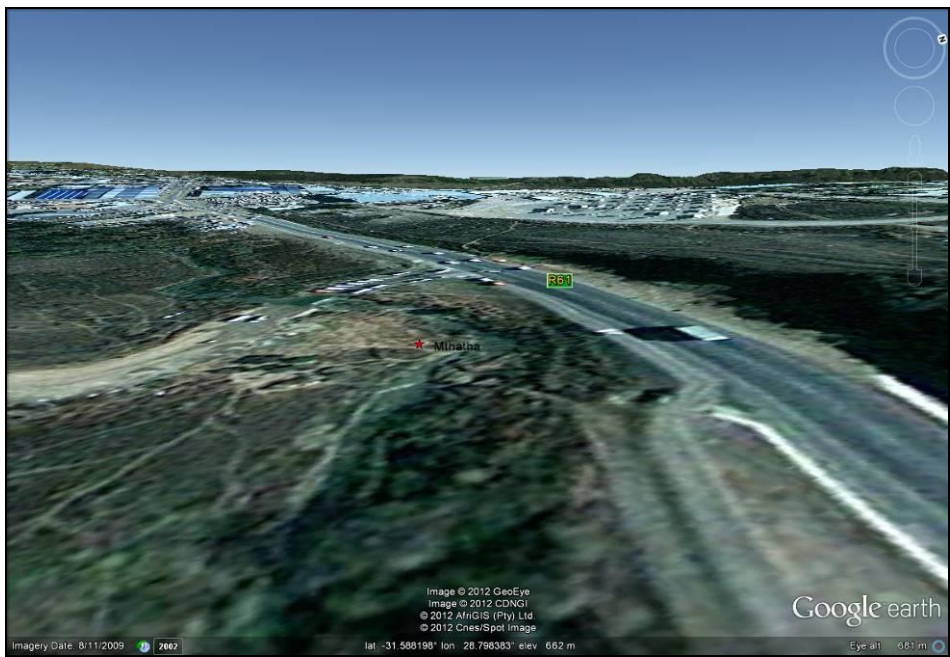


Fig 6 General view showing site 1 on the left

SITE 2

Mngazi River site

There appears to be riverine bush with both indigenous and exotic species growing along the banks. Tributaries that flow into the main river seem to have been used for domestic use and the appearance of the water is murky. There were no man-made structures observed close to the river besides a pile of concrete blocks possibly stored for later use on the east bank and a pump for filling trucks with water on the west bank. Both are in close proximity to the existing bridge over the Mngazi.

Subsistence farming appears to take place in the surrounding area with ploughed lands alongside the tributary in the vicinity of the bridge on the R61.



Fig 7 General view of the Mngazi River site looking north



Fig 8 Approaching the current Mngazi bridge on the R61



Fig 9 View from the bridge looking north-east



Fig 10 Mngazi River from the current bridge on the R61 looking north

4. HISTORY

4.1 Pre-history

A short overview

Archaic humans developed in Africa about 2.5 million years ago. Late Archeulian artefacts found scattered at random in the vicinity over the years probably prove that early man existed in this area. Middle Stone Age man, anatomically modern humans, left artefacts behind in the form of scrapers, flakes and knives. The Late Stone Age also left its traces in coastal middens, as did the Strandlopers, who were the last primitive groups of people to have lived along the shores. The San (hunter-gathers) were subjugated and assimilated, first by the Khoekhoen (cattle herders)

and then by the amaXhosa. Early European immigrants also made their presence felt. History records that the early inhabitants of the area were decimated by smallpox in 1740.

4.2 Early History

The siNthu speaking amaXhosa were to be found as far east as the Keiskamma River by the mid 17th Century. They originated from Mount Cameroon in West Africa from crop growing people who farmed with wood and stone implements and herded goats. Moving south east they acquired cattle and reached Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Wild Coast circa 1500 years ago. These Early Iron Age people were relatively sedentary, cultivating crops and smelting iron and copper. The unreliable summer rains west of the Kei River may have constrained their migration.

Five hundred years ago the Later Iron Age people, whose culture was linked specifically to cattle and who formed two language groups, namely the seSotho (interior) and the Nguni (of whom the amaXhosa were part, living on coastal lands), began to rapidly expand their territory. Clashes between the Khoekoen and Nguni were inevitable, resulting in the absorption of the former. The name Xhosa is probably derived from the Khoekhoe word //kosa meaning “kingly men”.

4.3 A Brief Contemporary History

4.3.1 Mthatha

The beginnings of the 19th Century found factions of the amaXhosa embroiled in war, making for instability in the Eastern Cape region. Fifty years later it is on record that Richard Calverley founded Mthatha (Umtata). He had been granted land in 1868 on the west bank of the Mthatha River by Ngangeliswe, chief of the Thembus who also issued another thirty-five grants along the river. His intention was to provide the Thembus with a buffer against the Pondos. This ground was situated where St John’s College stands today. Calverley’s grant included the area known as “The Camp Bend” where the Cape Mounted Rifles had their quarters.

At the same time Nquiliso, Chief of the Pondos, granted land on the east bank, amongst others to one Mr White, whose land was later expropriated to make way for a new road and bridge across the Mthatha River.

In the 1870’s Mthatha was little more than a British military outpost. It grew slowly but by the 27 March 1879, fifty-four citizens “earnestly petitioned” that the Honourable Colonial Secretary grant a site “for a township on the Umtata Tembuland to be selected and surveyed”. (Vaughan Holmes). This wish became a reality and development started to take place.

There are two possible origins of the name “Mthatha”. The first relates to the Sneezewood (Thathe) trees which are found in abundance alongside the river and are known for their medicinal properties and hard wood. The second is that the name is attributed to the treacherous nature of the river when it is in flood i.e. it “takes” (isiXhosa “thatha”) the people by drowning them. Culturally the area is significant. The chief, Mpondomisa, is buried alongside the Mthatha River. As a mark of respect to him, women were not allowed to lift their skirts when crossing.

NB Local cultural sensitivities must be taken into consideration when building new structures.

5. A review of the Sidwadeni River access road and bridge area in Mthatha

5.1 The river at this site is a small tributary with surrounding wetland vegetation. The gravel Bernard Schultz Road is to be extended and a new approach to Ms Makaluza's house on Remainder of Erf 861 will require a weir of some type if her access, which is currently onto the R 61, is to be re-located. In times of heavy rains the area might become dangerous and impassable. Fig 11 - 23 (*Photos taken by JS Bennie*)



Fig 11 Ms Makaluza's homestead Remainder of Erf 861
31° 35' 20.10"S; 28° 48' 0.94" E



Fig 12 Looking from Bernard Schultz Rd to Erf 861



Fig 13 and 14 Bernard Schultz Road west and east



Fig 15 Terrain in vicinity of access roads looking towards R61



Fig 16 and 17 Terrain looking towards Bernard Schultz Road



Fig 18 Terrain next to new approach road to the homestead (right of pic.)



Fig 19 Boundary Road looking towards Mthatha, the informal car wash and weir over the Sidwadeni River



Fig 20 Dumped rubble in vicinity of new approach road



Fig 21 Boundary Road looking south



Fig 22 New access road site onto the R61, Mthatha



Fig 23 R61 looking towards Mthatha

5.2 MNGAZI RIVER BRIDGE

Site 2

The area on the east bank of the Mngazi close to the proposed new access road and bridge is densely overgrown with exotic and indigenous bush. Pathways criss-cross the area near the river and wend along the tributary, allowing access to cattle, goats and individuals. Ploughed lands consisting of clay soil are to be found on the flat areas. Although it is traditional for the amaXhosa to bury their dead close to their homesteads there appeared to be no sign of any informal or formal gravesites. However, as the bush is very thick there is no guarantee that lone graves would not be found.

All the photographs below were taken by JS Bennie.



Fig 24 Mngazi sign on R61



Fig 25 Bridge on R 61 over the river



Fig 26 Water pump used by large trucks



Fig 27 The river looking north



Fig 28 Concrete blocks



Fig 29 View of proposed new crossing



Fig 30 The river is used for washing blankets and other laundry

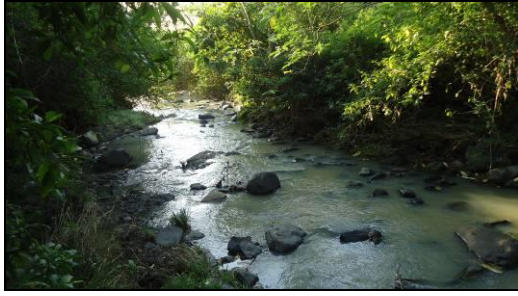


Fig 31 A tributary running into the Mngazi



Fig 32 Glimpse of ploughed lands



Fig 33 Tributary



Fig 34 Cattle track



Fig 35 Utilised murky water in a tributary



Fig 36 Vegetated green hills



Fig 37 Indigenous riverine bush



Fig 38 Pathway to river on new site



Fig 39 Exit onto existing gravel road



Fig 40, 41 Rural settlements



Fig 42, 43 Current gravel road which will link with the new access road and bridge

6. Discussion and Recommendations regarding historical structures

In terms of the requirements of the National Heritage Act 1999 (No 25 of 1999) the following recommendations are made regarding the structures under discussion.

- A permit would need to be obtained from SAHRA or the ECPHRA Permit Committee (see above) should it be necessary to demolish any structures e.g. part of the weir. The existing weir should not be demolished or altered without first considering all the impacts that might follow, including the geomorphological, social, historic, environmental and ecological implications.
- No disturbance may take place within 10 -15m of informal or demarcated designated graveyards or burial sites.
- Should any burial grounds or other structures be found in the construction process, all work should halt until SAHRA or ECPHRA and the historian have been informed.

7. Discussion and Recommendations regarding potential Burial Grounds and lone Graves.

7.1 Guidelines

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, (No 25 of 1999)

- 36(3) (a) No person may, without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency or provincial heritage resources authority-
- (b) 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; or
 - (c) bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph "a" or "b" any excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.
- (4) SAHRA or ECPHRA may not issue a permit for the damage or destruction of any burial ground or grave unless it is satisfied that the applicant has made satisfactory arrangements for the exhumation and re-interment of the contents of such graves at the cost of the applicant and in accordance with any regulations made by the responsible heritage resources authority.
- (5) The applicant must have made a concerted effort to contact and consult communities and individuals who by tradition have an interest in such graves or burial grounds and reached agreements regarding the future of such graves or burial grounds.
- (6) During the course of any development, the discovery of any previously unknown graves or burial sites must result in the immediate cessation of activities and the discovery must be reported to the responsible heritage resources authority (SAHRA) who in turn with the South African Police Service will carry out an investigation for the purpose of obtaining information on whether or not such a grave is protected in terms of the Act or is of significance to any community. If it is, assistance must be given to any person or community to make arrangements for exhumation and re-interment of the contents of such graves or in the absence of any such person or community make arrangements as it deems fit.

8. General Remarks and Conditions

This report is the historical observation pertaining to the designated construction sites as identified above. It forms part of the Heritage Impact Assessment, which in itself should make provision for the protection of all heritage resources of architectural, archaeological, scientific, social, linguistic, spiritual or technological significance that are over 60 years old.

The conclusions and recommendations expressed in this historical investigation are based on site survey and desktop research and may not truly reflect the entire situation. If further findings e.g. burial sites are discovered in the course of excavation or construction it is imperative that SAHRA, ECPHRA and/or the senior historian be informed immediately of the situation so that any relevant material may be investigated or collected before it is destroyed. The onus is on the developer to ensure that this agreement is honoured in accordance with the National Heritage Act No 25 of 1999.

The historical report will be assessed by the relevant heritage resources authority and the final decision rests with them regarding granting of a permit or letter of authority for permission to alter or destroy any cultural site.

9. References

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10. Contacts – Oral History

Jean Coulter
 Marco Garcia
 John Machin
 Ms Sangela

11. Summary assessment of key potential heritage impacts - Sidwadeni and Mngazi River access roads and bridges

Issue/Impact	Extent	Duration	Intensity	Probability	Significance	Confidence
Impact associated with graves						
Without mitigation	Local	Permanent	High	Highly probable	High	Medium
With mitigation	Local	Permanent	Medium	Highly probable	Medium	Medium

Annexure 1

Heritage co-ordinates taken on site by GP Kriel on 12 September 2012

Weir	31°35'17.39"S	28°47'50.85"E
Bridge Mngazi	31°36'34.73"S	29°24'18.66"E
Sidwadeni site	31°35'18.38"S	28°47'55.74"E

