



eThembeni
Cultural
Heritage

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04 April 2018

Attention Ros Devereaux

**Heritage Evaluation Report
Greater Mpofana Bulk Water Supply Scheme
Poplar Avenue on R103 / D146 Rosetta
Mpofana Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal**

Project Description ¹

In 2012, Amafa approved the Mooi-Mgeni Transfer Scheme (Phase 2) Heritage Impact Assessment Report submitted by Umlando Archaeological Surveys & Heritage Management (Case ID2153). This report covered, in part, the proposed pipeline reticulation currently under review.

A report compiled by Active Heritage in 2014 for the Spring Vale Housing Development project (SAHRIS Case ID 11620), identified an avenue of poplar trees (*Populus spp*) running parallel to the D146 as part of the cultural landscape. Active Heritage determined these to be of medium heritage significance in a local context, and that they should be retained as historical artefacts of the cultural landscape.

The proposed pipe servitude is planned to run in the alignment of the historical poplar avenue. The alignment was chosen as it runs over a vacant field. An alignment on the opposite side of the D246 is highly undesirable as this would impact on existing residential structures and formal gardens. Apart from the remnant treeline, the preferred route is the most unencumbered with the least impact on existing infrastructure.

¹ Information provided by Kusini Environmental Services (ECO).

Observations

eThembeni inspected the site on 3 April 2018. Historically, the avenue of poplars was aligned from the intersection of the R103 along the D146 to its junction with the P19/KZN223 (see Figure 1.) traversing a distance of some 330 m and crossing the upper reaches of the Spring Vale stream and wetland. Whether the avenue was planted variously as a windbreak, a farm boundary or an entrance track to a parent farm is unclear.

However, the choice of poplar was, in all likelihood, an attempt to reduce ponding on the access road where it traversed the wetland. Poplars are also frost resistant and quick growing in the summer, thus quickly establishing a demarcated boundary avenue and/or windbreak.



Figure 1a D146 – P19 Alignment (2017)



Figure 1b D146 – P19 Alignment (2013)



Figure 1c D146 – P19 Alignment (2008)

Currently only 11 trees remain erect along the avenue. At their established spacing of 3 m the avenue would have comprised in the region of 110 trees. Thus, only 10% of the original avenue is intact. Of these remaining trees, the majority show signs of fire, wind and snow damage that has led to them coppicing as multi-stemmed trees at lower to mid-height (see Figure 2). Poplars are further declared Category 2 aliens. Once removed they may not be replaced.

Figures 1a, 1b, 1c illustrate that, in contrast to expansion, the avenue has remained in degradation over the last decade.

Thus, the retention of the remnant poplars is difficult to justify as an historical feature. They have lost their context in the extant landscape as the avenue no longer leads to the entrance of the parent farm. It does however provide a shielding boundary for the northern extent of the Spring Vale Housing development.² The avenue, in its current form, is reminiscent of a mandible with many missing teeth (see Figure 3).

If it is the intention to attempt to recreate the historical avenue in the current landscape it is probably best to take the advice and recommendations of the appointed ecologist to plant high moisture tolerant endemic species, such as false olive (*Buddleja saligna*) and pom-pom (*Dias cotonifolia*) trees. These are quick growing species with relatively shallow root systems. They would quickly hide the landscape scarring caused by the pipe excavations, and mature within a few years to provide a robust avenue of vegetation along the previous alignment.

² The Spring Vale Housing Development is an initiative of CoGTA to provide residential security for previous labour tenants from surrounding farms. Infrastructure and services are in the process of being installed. Critically, water from the proposed Mpofana BWSS reticulation is earmarked for this community, who currently retrieve unpurified water from the Springvale Spruit.



Figure 3 Remnant poplar avenue at the junction of the R103 and D146.
(Note: sub-story of feral eucalyptus)

Recommendations

On the basis of this heritage evaluation we request that Amafa allow the remnant poplar avenue to be removed for laying of the pipeline reticulation and that, on project completion, the ECO ensures that the historical avenue is re-established with endemic species compatible to the envisaged reinstatement.

In this regard, please can you notify us timeously via the loaded SAHRIS case file as to the decision of Amafa.

Yours sincerely

Len van Schalkwyk
Principle Investigator.

Further Images for SAHRIS upload





