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Cultural  
Heritage*

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**Attention Mr. Sello Mokhanya**

**Heritage Scoping Report**

**THE UPGRADING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE MAHOBE ROAD CULVERT CROSSINGS  
MOUNT AYLIFF, UMZIMVUBU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, EASTERN CAPE**

**Project Description<sup>1</sup>**

The Umzimvubu Local Municipality has recently appointed ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants (ACER) as the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) responsible for obtaining environmental authorisation, and the relevant permits, licenses and approvals required for the proposed construction of two (2) bridge culvert crossings along the existing Mahobe gravel road in the Mzimvubu Local Municipality, Eastern Cape<sup>2</sup>.

To this end eThembeni Cultural Heritage Management was appointed by ACER to undertake a heritage resources assessment of the road upgrades and construction.

The Mahobe gravel access road is located near the settlement of Coloti which is located in a rural area of the Eastern Cape approximately 44 km north-west of the town of Mt Frere and 10 km east of Mount Fletcher. The two culvert crossings will be constructed along the Mahobe Road at the following crossing points:

- Crossing 1: S 30 40 33.06 and E 28 36 48.26
- Crossing 2: S 30 40 31.05 and E 28 36 45.02

See Figure 1.

<sup>1</sup> As provided by the EAP: ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants (ACER)

<sup>2</sup> See Project Description loaded to SAHRIS Case File



**Figure 1**      **Locality Map: proposed Mahobe Road Culvert Crossings<sup>3</sup>**

The Mahobe gravel access road is currently unusable due to one concrete pipe crossing having been washed away following heavy rainfall and another pipe crossing is showing signs of erosion which is likely to result in its collapse during future high rainfall. The proposed culvert crossings will replace the current concrete pipe crossings as they allow for a greater volume of water to flow through the crossings thus reducing the chances of wash-aways and damage to the culverts and road infrastructure. The construction of the culvert crossings will have a significant positive socio-economic impact on the surrounding rural communities as it will allow vehicular access to these rural areas and improve safety to surrounding communities who cross these drainage lines on a regular basis.

### **Site Assessment and Observations**

eThembeni staff inspected the proposed road alignment on 18 June 2018.

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<sup>3</sup> See Track Log loaded to SAHRIS Case File

No archaeological residues were however observed along transects we walked, following the proposed road upgrade between the two causeway locations.

At c. 1450 -1650 m amsl this environment would characteristically comprise mist-belt grasslands along the lee of the western scarp range, with the woody vegetation component comprising *Buddleja* and *Leucosidea* thickets. This woody element has been largely replaced by invasive black wattle thickets (*Acacia mearnsii*), particularly along watercourses and drainage lines. The general area is subject to extremely harsh winter weather conditions.

In precolonial times this environment would have only been exploited seasonally by hunter gatherer bands in search of spring-flowering geophytes and in pursuit of game drawn to the emerging sweet veld *Themeda* grazing. Iron Age pastoralists would have made use of this grazing too during a short transhumance window in spring and early summer from their settled homesteads in the lower and middle reaches of the Umzimvubu and its secondary drainage basins. Consequently, the archaeological footprint on the landscape is expected to be negligible to non-existent.<sup>4</sup>

Increased population and land pressures during the 19<sup>th</sup> C witnessed increasing use of these higher altitude areas by pastoral and subsistence farmers, especially refugee clans moving south from the internecine conflicts flowing out of the Zulu Kingdom. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> C these clans (eg. Bhaca, amaPondo and Mpondomise) were settled in disparate nuclear homesteads across this landscape under established chieftaincies. Late 19<sup>th</sup> C colonial governance and 20<sup>th</sup> C social engineering was however to change this ethnographic pattern, culminating in the scattered nuclear homesteads being settled into consolidated villages (*amalali*) during the 1960's, as a consequence of State driven betterment schemes.<sup>5</sup>

In and around the extant village community at Mahobe evidence of abandoned homesteads are observable. However, no abandoned homesteads with attendant graves were observed within 50m of the proposed causeway upgrades. Consequently no impact on these is envisaged (see Protocol below).

### **Recommendations with regard to the possibility of graves being discovered in the course of development activities**

It is recommended that the following protocol be made binding in the Record of Decision (R.o.D.): "During the Public Participation Processes, the project Community Liaison Officer (CLO) and the Environmental Control Officer (ECO) shall engage with stakeholders to ascertain the presence of unmarked or invisible grave sites.

Any identified grave sites should ideally be left with a twenty metre (20m) buffer from construction activities and be fenced pending engagement with the relevant Authorities and any identified family members having an association or interest in the grave. In the event of unintentional exposure of a grave or a request from a family for exhumation and re-interment the CLO/ECO shall immediately contact the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Agency to obtain the necessary protocols and procedures for the management of such human remains".

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<sup>4</sup> Feely, J.M. 1987. The early farmers of Transkei, southern Africa: before A.D. 1870. Oxford: B.A.R.  
Feely, J.M. & Bell-Cross, S.M. 2011. The distribution of Early Iron Age settlement in the Eastern Cape: Some historical and ecological implications. South African Archaeological Bulletin **66**: 105–12.  
<sup>5</sup> The Tomlinson Commission. 1956: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/segregation-apartheid>.

Whilst the study area falls within the red sensitivity modelling on the SAHRIS Palaeo-sensitivity map due to the underlying Molteno Formation, intensive dolerite intrusion and deep weathering of the Karoo Supergroup overburden suggest that the palaeontological potential within the project activity area is significantly diminished. No deep excavation of the underlying bedrock is anticipated and in order to limit impacts on the receiving environment the associated works for the culvert crossings will entail:

- The culvert crossings being keyed into the banks of the stream/river.
- Culverts will be placed in a manner that allows for the free movement of water and sediment.
- Culverts will be placed at the same level as the base of the stream/river.

It is our considered opinion that the potential impact to heritage resources through implementation of the proposed road and culvert project are very low. No heritage resources were identified within the proposed spheres of activity.

Accordingly, and given the nature of the projects as an upgrade within existing servitudes and services infrastructure, it is requested that the proposed project area be exempt from the requirements of a full Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment.

On behalf of the client, ACER (Africa), we are applying for exemption from an HIA for the project.

Please could you convey the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resource's Agency decision on this matter to the appointed Environmental Practitioner, Mr. Giles Churchill, of ACER (Africa), [giles.churchill@acerafrica.co.za](mailto:giles.churchill@acerafrica.co.za)

Yours sincerely



Len van Schalkwyk.  
Principal Investigator.