



*eThembeni
Cultural
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Attention Mr. Sello Mokhanya

Heritage Scoping Report

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

Project Description¹

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 a bridge culvert crossing along the existing Mandlangeni gravel access road in the Mzimvubu Local Municipality, Eastern Cape².

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

The Mandlangeni gravel access road services the settlements of Nqumane and Dinana which are located in a rural area of the Eastern Cape approximately 35 km north of the town of Mt Frere and 44 km northwest of Mount Ayliff in the Umzimvubu Local Municipality. The Mandlangeni gravel access road is currently unusable due to one concrete pipe crossing having been washed away following heavy rainfall. The proposed culvert crossing will replace the concrete pipe crossing as a culvert crossing allows for a greater volume of water to flow through the crossing thus reducing the chances of wash-aways and damage to the culverts and road infrastructure. The construction of the culvert crossing will have a significant positive socio-economic impact on the surrounding rural communities as it will allow vehicular access between the settlements of Nqumane and Dinana and improve safety to surrounding communities who cross this drainage line on a regular basis.

¹ As provided by the EAP: ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants (ACER)

² See Project Description loaded to SAHRIS Case File

One culvert crossing will be constructed along the Mandlangeni Road at the following crossing point:

Crossing 1: S 30 35 50.4 and E 28 58 54.3 (See Figure 1).

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Figure 1 Locality Map: proposed Mandlangeni Road Culvert Crossing and track log³

Site Assessment and Observations

eThembeni staff inspected the proposed culvert location along the Mandlangeni road on 19 June 2018.

³ See Track Log loaded to SAHRIS Case File



Figure 2 Proposed Mandlangeni Road Culvert Crossing

No significant archaeological residues were observed along transects walked in the vicinity of the proposed causeway location. A single Middle Stone Age (MSA) unifacial point rendered on hornfels was observed in the flood line of the stream crossing. It is water worn, out of primary context and of limited scientific significance.



Figure 3 MSA unifacial hornfels point

At c. 1300 m amsl this environment would characteristically comprise mist-belt grasslands with the woody vegetation component comprising *Buddleja* and *Leucosidea* thickets along the lee of the western scarp ranges. This woody element has been largely replaced by pervasive black wattle thickets (*Acacia mearnsii*), particularly along watercourses and drainage lines (see Figure 1).

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.⁴

Increased population and land pressures during the 19th 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-19th C these clans (eg. Bhaca, amaPondo and Mpondomise) were settled in disparate nuclear homesteads across this landscape under established chieftaincies. Late 19th C colonial governance and 20th 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.⁵

In and around the extant village communities at Mandlangeni evidence of abandoned homesteads and abandoned and fallow fields were observed. However, no abandoned homesteads with attendant graves were observed within 50m of the proposed causeway upgrade. 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".

The study area falls within the red sensitivity modelling on the SAHRIS Palaeo-sensitivity map due to the underlying Adelaide Formation comprising deltaic and fluvial sequences of sandstone and green-grey mudstone of the Mid Permian to Earliest Triassic period containing diverse terrestrial and freshwater tetrapods of the Dicynodon and Lystrosaurus assemblage zones. These assemblage zones witness some of the richest Permo-Triassic tetrapod fauna from Pangaea / Gondwana and are key evidence for the evolution of mammalian characters among therapsids and the continental record of Late Permian Mass Extinction Events. A palaeontologist familiar with these formations has been contacted to express an opinion on the possibility of fossil remains being exposed at the proposed Mandlangeni culvert location.

⁴ 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.

⁵ The Tomlinson Commission. 1956: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/segregation-apartheid>.

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 of significance were identified within the proposed spheres of activity.

Accordingly, and given the nature of the projects as an infrastructural upgrade within an existing servitude, 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

Yours sincerely



Len van Schalkwyk.
Principal Investigator.