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Attention Mr. Sello Mokhanya

Heritage Scoping Report

**GRAVEL ACCESS ROADS AND BRIDGE CULVERTS
MOUNT FRERE, 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 several new gravel access roads and bridge culverts in the Mzimvubu Local Municipality, Eastern Cape.

The Umzimvubu Local Municipality has identified a need to construct and upgrade a number of gravel access roads and stream crossings, in order to improve access and safety for communities within the municipality. The proposed new and upgraded gravel access roads and crossings will typically entail the following specifications:

- New 5 m wide gravel access roads consisting of G5 gravel and compacted to a height of approximately 200 mm.
- The construction of concrete causeways approximately 5.5 m in length and 4.5 m wide with a peak flow of 8.96m³ / s, comprising of prefabricated pipes (10 x 600 mm diameter and 4 x 900mm diameter pipes) attached along the length of the bridge.
- Concrete drive strips for the steeper sections.
- The construction of storm water infrastructure such as cut-out drains and dish drains where required along the alignment.
- The placement of road traffic signs.

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

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

The proposed gravel access roads and concrete causeways of concern in this report are located in the vicinity of the town of Mount Frere.

1. Mpungutyana Gravel Access Road and Concrete Causeway



Figure 1 Locality Map: Mpungutyana Gravel Access Road

The village of Mpungutyana is situated approximately 19 km north of Mount Frere. Currently, the only access road connecting the Mpungutyana village to the surrounding settlements is dilapidated and in a state of severe disrepair. Upgrades of the existing access road and stream crossings is envisaged, which will improve access and safety for all communities commuting to and from the village of Mpungutyana.

The proposed development entails the construction of approximately 3.6 km of new gravel access road from Mpungutyana (A) to Mgungundlovu (B). A concrete causeway will be constructed at the watercourse crossing located at (30°42'37.52\"S / 28°59'4.25\"E). See Figure 1.

Site Assessment and Observations

eThembeni staff inspected the proposed road alignment on June 10th 2017.

Umgungundlovu and Mpungutyana villages are remotely located in high altitude sour grass veld (1500-1600m masl.). The climax red grass (*Themeda triandra*) pasture is severely overgrazed to the point of dominance by *Aristida*, *Sporobolus* and other increaser grass species. Drainage lines are severely

invaded with black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) and the adjacent grass swards increasingly encroached with a woody shrub elements including *Felicia* and *Cliffortia spp.*

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 during a short transhumance window in spring and summer from their settled homesteads in the lower reaches of the Umzimvubu drainage basin. Consequently, the archaeological footprint on the landscape is expected to be negligible to non-existent².

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 fleeing south from the internecine conflicts flowing out of the Zulu Kingdom. By the early 20th C these clans were settled in disparate nuclear homesteads across this landscape under established chieftaincies. Colonial governance and social engineering was however to change this ethnographic pattern, culminating in scattered nuclear homesteads being settled into consolidated villages (*amalali*) during the 1960's as a consequence of State driven betterment schemes.³

The predominantly grassland interfluvies between Mgungungdlovu and Mpungutyana show evidence of these past homesteads and their attendant ploughed fields. Whilst no remains of structures were observed, grindstones and graves mark the location of these abandoned homesteads. None of the latter were observed within 20m of the proposed upgraded alignment and consequently no impact on these is envisaged (see Protocol below).

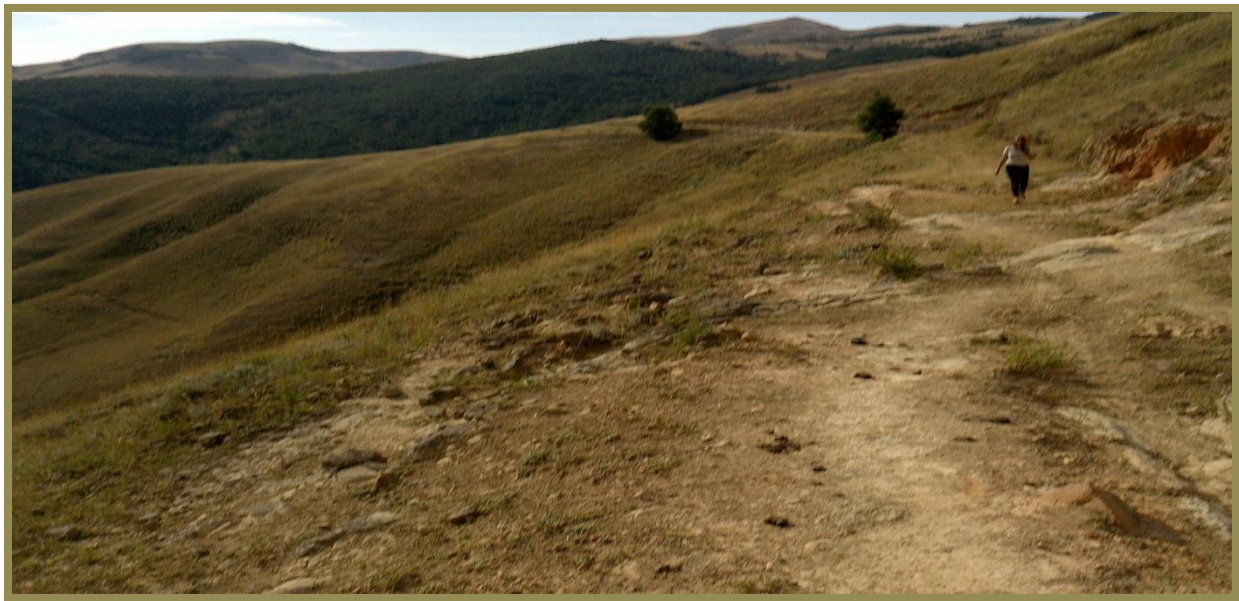


Figure 2 Mpungutyana Gravel Access Track

² 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.

³ The Tomlinson Commission. 1956: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/segregation-apartheid>



Figure 3 Mpungutyana village in the far distance to the SW



Figure 4 Grave at abandoned homestead adjacent to Mpungutyana – Mgungundlovu access road



Figure 5 Grave at abandoned homestead adjacent to the Mgungundlovu access road

2. Mthonjeni to Kwa-Duma Gravel Access Road and Concrete Causeways

The village of Mthonjeni is situated approximately 14 km north-west of Mount Frere. The existing access roads connecting the communities of Mthonjeni to Kwa-Duma (Ngapesheya) are barely accessible and severely eroded. The need has been identified to upgrade and construct new sections of access road as well as a concrete causeway at the existing informal stream crossing. This will improve safety and provide vehicle access for communities commuting to and from the surrounding areas.

The preferred alignment for the new and upgraded sections of gravel access roads are illustrated in Figure 6, below.



Figure 6 Locality of the proposed Mthonjeni – Kwa-Duma (Ngaphesheya) gravel access road.

eThembeni staff visited the Mthonjeni and Kwa-Duma area on 10 June 2017. The settlements are relatively densely settled agrarian villages laid out in characteristic *amalali* fashion with fenced homestead precincts, gardens and fields. The intervening open spaces are used as communal grazing, and feral wattle stands are exploited for fuel and construction. Graves are mostly located within the compounds of the homestead precincts. Where the latter have been abandoned, most graves retain a fence or barricade of some sort. The road upgrades envisaged follow existing track networks between the two villages. Apart from grave locations, no other heritage resources of any significance were observed.



Figure 7 Vista SW towards Mthonjeni village



Figure 8 Access road to Mthonjeni village due for upgrade



Figure 9 Proposed access to causeway between the villages. Kwa-Duma -Mthonjeni



Figure 10 Graves within an abandoned homestead precinct – Kwa-Duma village



Fig 11 Mthonjeni village viewed to the SW from Kwa-Duma

3. Silver City Gravel Roads and Concrete Causeways

The need has identified the need for access roads to be constructed to the Silver City village, and within the semi-formal housing settlements, of the town of Mount Frere. The the need to upgrade several existing gravel roads within the town will further allow local residents easier and safer access to the surrounding community areas. (See Figure 12).

1. The project development will involve:
 - the construction of two new gravel access roads on the south-eastern periphery of the town:
 - The construction of a new gravel access road of approximately 373 m in length from A to B including the construction of a concrete causeway (Crossing 1).
 - The construction of a new gravel access road of approximately 651 m in length from C to D including the construction of a concrete causeway (Crossing 2).
2. Formalisation and upgrading of approximately 2,340 m of existing gravel access roads within the town of Mount Frere:
 - Formalisation and upgrade of 412 m of existing gravel road from the N2 at E to F.
 - Formalisation and upgrade of 1,296 m of existing gravel road from G to the N2 at H.
 - Formalisation and upgrade of 626 m of existing gravel road from I to J.

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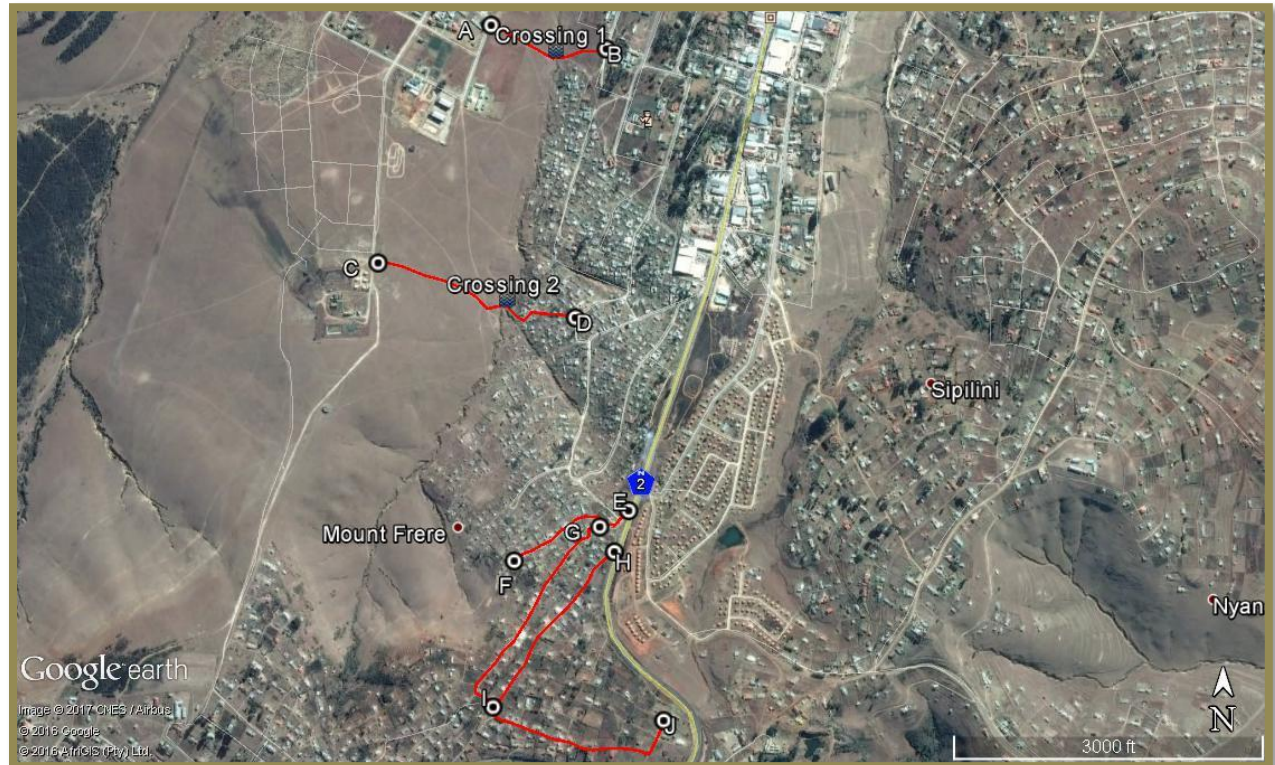


Figure 12 Location of the proposed gravel access roads and concrete causeways and the existing gravel roads to be upgraded and formalised in Mount Frere

eThembeni staff inspected the areas on 10 June 2017. No heritage resources of any significance were observed. Despite the more recent peri-urban and informal settlement sprawl municipal regulations require all burials to take place within the local municipal cemetery. No graves were observed within or without of the homestead precincts. Roads AB and CD traverse “greenfield” alignments to the west of the town centre. Parts of these have been ploughed in the past but the greater portion appears to have served as the town’s commonage. Communal grazing is still prevalent but the fields lie fallow.



Figure 13 Road IJ due for upgrade – Mount Ayliff



Fig 14 Commonage and traverse of Road AB to Crossing 1 - Mt Ayliff



Figure 15 Crossing 1 – Mount Ayliff



Figure 16 Traverse of Road CD eastwards to Crossing 2 - Mount Ayliff

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".

It is our considered opinion that the potential impact to heritage resources through implementation of the proposed Roads Upgrade Projects are very low. No heritage resources were identified within the proposed spheres of activity.

The study area falls within blue and grey sensitivity modelling on the Palaeo-sensitivity map due to intensive dolerite intrusion into, and deep weathering of, the Karoo Supergroup overburden. Thus, no PIA is necessary.

It is highly unlikely that any in situ heritage resources, except nearby grave sites, are present in this densely settled landscape, of which sections have been severely disturbed by recent settlement and agricultural use.

On the basis of this Heritage Scoping Assessment it is our considered opinion that no heritage resources of significance will be wilfully impacted upon. Accordingly, and given the nature of the projects as, largely upgrades 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 this basis we request that ECPHRA authorise the project to proceed with no further heritage resource mitigation requirements.

Please could you convey the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resource's Agency decision on this matter to the appointed Environmental Practitioner, Jacques Blignaut of ACER (Africa).

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Yours sincerely



Len van Schalkwyk.
Principal Investigator.