

TO: SAHRA

Att: Mr. Phillip Hine / Ms. Jenna Lavin
Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit

From: Adansonia Heritage Consultants
Christine (van Wyk) Rowe

Date: 12 December 2013

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO MOVE THE ROOIDRAAI ROCK ENGRAVING

Background:

An archaeological scoping assessment was conducted in 2006 on the *remainder of portion 7 of the farm Rooidraai 34 JT*, on the outskirts of the town Lydenburg (Mashishing), Mpumalanga. A section on the farm is earmarked for the Panorama (Lydenburg) Mall development.

A Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted in April 2006 (Phase 1 HIA for the Morning Tide Development Complex, by Archaeology Africa cc, P. Birkholtz), (SAHRA Arch. Ref. 9/2/236/0002). A review comment by SAHRA, was issued on 23 October 2007. The rock engraving site (identified in the report by Mr. Birkholtz) was listed as RDR 8.

The **review comment by SAHRA (23 October 2007)** stated the following:

- The rock engraving (RDR 8) must be preserved *in situ* and a surrounding buffer zone must be demarcated. A management plan which includes monitoring during the construction and operational phases and sustainable conservation must be compiled.

A **documentation report and management plan** was conducted in **August 2013**, by Adansonia Heritage Consultants (C. van Wyk Rowe). A permit application (by A. Pelsler) is currently pending for the excavation and destruction of the poorly defined Late Iron Age site (RDR 7) which is closest to the engraving site RDR 8.

The owners / developers, Thornby Mollows One (Pty) Ltd, of the Panorama (Lydenburg) Mall, initially planned to incorporate the site as part of a feature in the development and to preserve it *in situ* as a green open space. The site was also fenced in with a locked gate to protect it during the construction phase (see Fig. 2).

However, after ground works for the construction has started, it became clear that the rock engraving site (RDR 8) will be negatively impacted upon by the development and the integrity of the site is at risk.



Fig. 1: Aerial photo of development with engraving site.



Fig. 2: RDR 8 as viewed from the level of the parking area. The engraving is completely indistinct, seen from this height.



Fig. 3: RDR 8 will be 4-6m below the surface of the parking area.



Fig. 4: The rock with the engraving (arrow)

A letter by Thornby Mellows One (Pty) Ltd to Adansonia Heritage Consultants, was received on 9 December 2013, requesting SAHRA's permission to move the rock engraving to a better suitable area (See Appendix 1).

The following was observed:

1. The rock engraving (RDR 8) will be 4-6 meters below the surface of the final development;
2. The rock engraving (RDR 8) will be situated in the parking area and directly opposite entrance 1 of the planned Panorama (Lydenburg) Mall (See Appendix 2 Plan of New Mall);
3. It is not viable to enclose the engraving (RDR 8) at this level as a feature, as the engraving is not clear (see Fig. 4) and has to be observed from a close distance to be appreciated;
4. To leave the site open, will pose additional problems of vandalism and dumping of litter;
5. The greatest threat to the engraving site (RDR 8) will be the lack of water drainage. If it is situated at this level, (4-6m below the surface), water will collect and stay in the section, creating a micro climate in the damp and shady environment, and encouraging mosses (Bryophytes) to cover the rocks and the engraving.

Recommendation

The integrity of the rock engraving RDR 8 is at risk and it will be greatly compromised due to the current influence of the Panorama (Lydenburg) Mall development. It will not be possible to protect it efficiently at its current position in the development. The educational value of the site will also be lost.

It is recommended that due to the current state of the rock engraving site in the development area, SAHRA considers that the engraving be moved to a suitable and better protected environment such as the Lydenburg Museum, which indicated that they have no objection to house and protect the rock engraving (see Appendix 3). The Lydenburg Museum is 4.4 km north-east of the engraving site.

It is recommended that the rock engraving with the entire small rocky outcrop on which it is situated, be moved as a unit and that it will face the same direction as it is currently in.

The developers must provide the financial and other means to move the rock engraving under supervision of the archaeologist.

Conclusion:

The developer, Thornby Mellows One (Pty) Ltd has to date adhered to all specifications and mitigation measures as set out by SAHRA for the protection of the rock engraving site. They are now concerned about the future conservation and protection of the site and brought it to the attention of Adansonia Heritage Consultants. They are requesting that the site rather be moved to where it may serve an educational purpose, be studied by researchers as well as to be enjoyed by the wider public in a safe and protected environment.

Your positive consideration will be appreciated in this regard.

Yours sincerely

Christine van Wyk Rowe