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**A PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT & REPORT FOR THE  
FOR THE BOKONI PLATINUM MINE COMMUNITY BRIDGE PROJECT  
ON A PORTION OF THE FARM MIDDELPUNT 420KS  
NORTH OF LEBOWAKGOMO IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

For:

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REPORT: **APAC022/57**

by:

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***June 2022***

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Pelser', is centered below the disclaimer text.

## SUMMARY

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by Red Kite Environmental Solutions (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge Project. The proposed development & study area is located on a portion of the farm Middelpunt 420KS, north of Lebowakgomo and in the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

Background research indicates that there are some cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, while some sites with an archaeological origin & significance identified and recorded in the study area and proposed development site boundaries during the June 2022 field assessment. This report discusses the results of both the background research and physical assessment and provides recommendations on the way forward at the end.

From a Cultural Heritage point of view it can be concluded that the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge development can be allowed to continue, once the recommendations on required mitigation measures put forward at the end of the report has been implemented.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by Red Kite Environmental Solutions (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge Project. The proposed development & study area is located on a portion of the farm Middelpunt 420KS, north of Lebowakgomo and in the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

Background research indicates that there are some cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, while some sites with an archaeological origin & significance identified and recorded in the study area and proposed development site boundaries during the June 2022 field assessment.

The client indicated the location and boundaries of the study area and the assessment focused on this portion.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Terms of Reference for the study was to:

1. Identify all objects, sites, occurrences and structures of an archaeological or historical nature (cultural heritage sites) located on the portion of land that will be impacted upon by the proposed development;
2. Assess the significance of the cultural resources in terms of their archaeological, historical, scientific, social, religious, aesthetic and tourism value;
3. Describe the possible impact of the proposed development on these cultural remains, according to a standard set of conventions;
4. Propose suitable mitigation measures to minimize possible negative impacts on the cultural resources;
5. Review applicable legislative requirements;

## **3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two Acts. These are the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998).

### **3.1. The National Heritage Resources Act**

According to the Act the following is protected as cultural heritage resources:

- a. Archaeological artifacts, structures and sites older than 100 years
- b. Ethnographic art objects (e.g. prehistoric rock art) and ethnography
- c. Objects of decorative and visual arts
- d. Military objects, structures and sites older than 75 years
- e. Historical objects, structures and sites older than 60 years
- f. Proclaimed heritage sites
- g. Grave yards and graves older than 60 years
- h. Meteorites and fossils
- i. Objects, structures and sites of scientific or technological value.

**The National Estate includes the following:**

- a. Places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance
- b. Places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage
- c. Historical settlements and townscapes
- d. Landscapes and features of cultural significance
- e. Geological sites of scientific or cultural importance
- f. Sites of Archaeological and paleontological importance
- g. Graves and burial grounds
- h. Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery
- i. Movable objects (e.g. archaeological, paleontological, meteorites, geological specimens, military, ethnographic, books etc.)

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is the process to be followed in order to determine whether any heritage resources are located within the area to be developed as well as the possible impact of the proposed development thereon. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) only looks at archaeological resources. A HIA must be done under the following circumstances:

- a. The construction of a linear development (road, wall, power line, canal etc.) exceeding 300m in length
- b. The construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length
- c. Any development or other activity that will change the character of a site and exceed 5 000m<sup>2</sup> or involve three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof
- d. Re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000m<sup>2</sup>
- e. Any other category provided for in the regulations of SAHRA or a provincial heritage authority

**Structures**

Section 34(1) of the Act state that no person may demolish any structure or part thereof that is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

A structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to land, and includes any fixtures, fittings and equipment associated therewith.

Alter means any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering or the decoration or any other means.

### **Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites**

Section 35(4) of the Act deals with archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites. The Act states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority (national or provincial)

- a. destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or paleontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or paleontological material or object or any meteorite;
- c. trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or paleontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or paleontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and paleontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.
- e. alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years as protected.

**The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). In order to demolish such a site or structure, a destruction permit from SAHRA will also be needed.**

### **Human remains**

Graves and burial grounds are divided into the following:

- a. ancestral graves
- b. royal graves and graves of traditional leaders
- c. graves of victims of conflict
- d. graves designated by the Minister
- e. historical graves and cemeteries
- f. human remains

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority:

- a. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position of otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;
- b. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- c. bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) any excavation, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

Human remains that are less than 60 years old are subject to provisions of the Human Tissue Act (Act 65 of 1983) and to local regulations. Exhumation of graves must conform to the standards set out in the **Ordinance on Excavations (Ordinance no. 12 of 1980)** (replacing the old Transvaal Ordinance no. 7 of 1925).

Permission must also be gained from the descendants (where known), the National Department of Health, Provincial Department of Health, Premier of the Province and local police. Furthermore, permission must also be gained from the various landowners (i.e. where the graves are located and where they are to be relocated to) before exhumation can take place.

Human remains can only be handled by a registered undertaker or an institution declared under the **Human Tissues Act (Act 65 of 1983 as amended)**.

### **3.2. The National Environmental Management Act**

This Act states that a survey and evaluation of cultural resources must be done in areas where development projects, that will change the face of the environment, will be undertaken. The impact of the development on these resources should be determined and proposals for the mitigation thereof are made.

Environmental management should also take the cultural and social needs of people into account. Any disturbance of landscapes and sites that constitute the nation's cultural heritage should be avoided as far as possible and where this is not possible the disturbance should be minimized and remedied.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Survey of literature**

A survey of available literature was undertaken in order to place the development area in an archaeological and historical context. The sources utilized in this regard are indicated in the bibliography.



## **4.2. Field survey**

The field assessment section of the study was conducted according to generally accepted HIA practices and aimed at locating all possible objects, sites and features of heritage significance in the area of the proposed development. The location/position of all sites, features and objects is determined by means of a Global Positioning System (GPS) where possible, while detail photographs are also taken where needed.

## **4.3. Oral histories**

People from local communities are sometimes interviewed in order to obtain information relating to the surveyed area. It needs to be stated that this is not applicable under all circumstances. When applicable, the information is included in the text and referred to in the bibliography.

## **4.4. Documentation**

All sites, objects, features and structures identified are documented according to a general set of minimum standards. Co-ordinates of individual localities are determined by means of the Global Positioning System (GPS). The information is added to the description in order to facilitate the identification of each locality.

## **5. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA**

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by Red Kite Environmental Solutions (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge Project. The proposed development & study area is located on a portion of the farm Middelpunt 420KS, north of Lebowakgomo and in the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

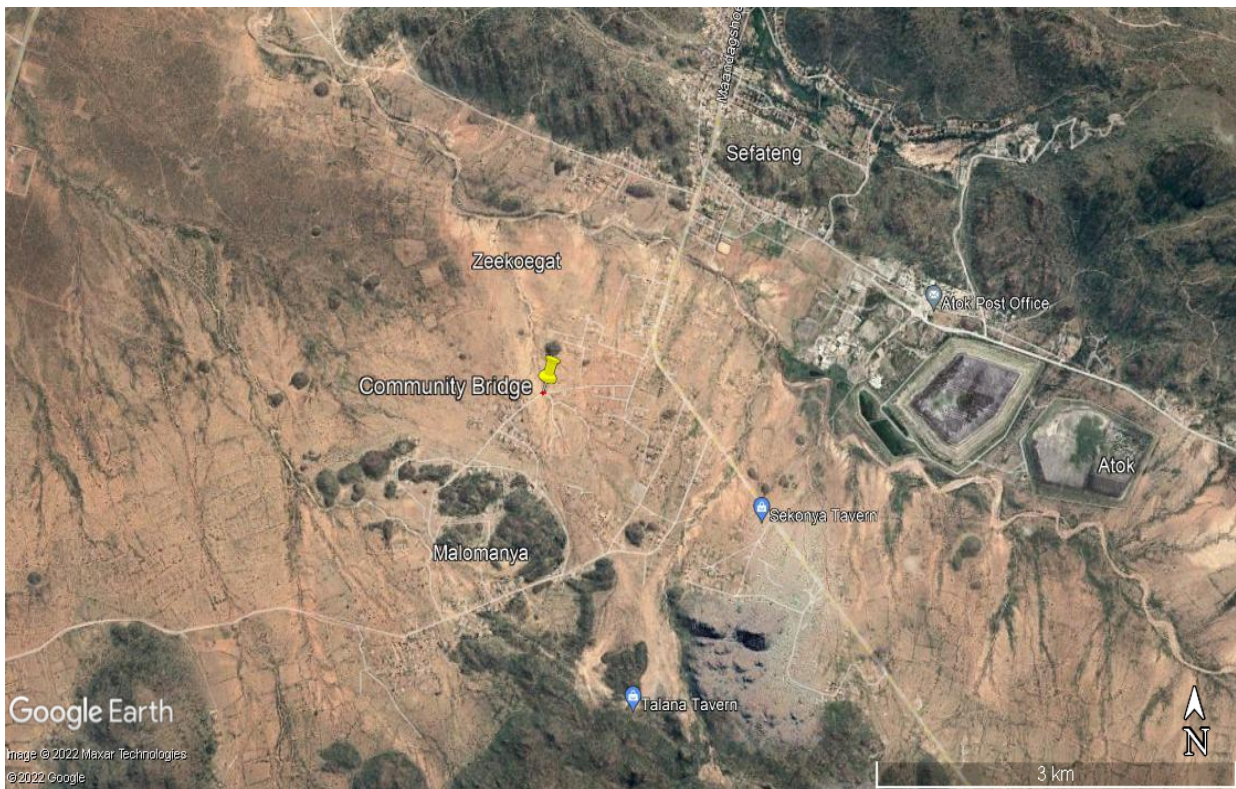
The proposed project entails the construction of a bridge over a tributary of the Rapholo River. Currently the community has to cross the river on foot or vehicle using a dirt road at this crossing point.

The topography of the study area is relatively flat and open and although vegetation cover on the banks of the river is fairly dense in sections, visibility on the ground & access to the location that had to be assessed was not limited. The larger area is also used for livestock grazing, while the area around the study site has been impacted by rural/urban residential settlement and associated activities. The dirt road that crosses the river/stream at this point has also impacted to some degree on the proposed development location. Large-scale erosion (dongas) caused by water flow (flooding) and overgrazing characterizes the area as well.

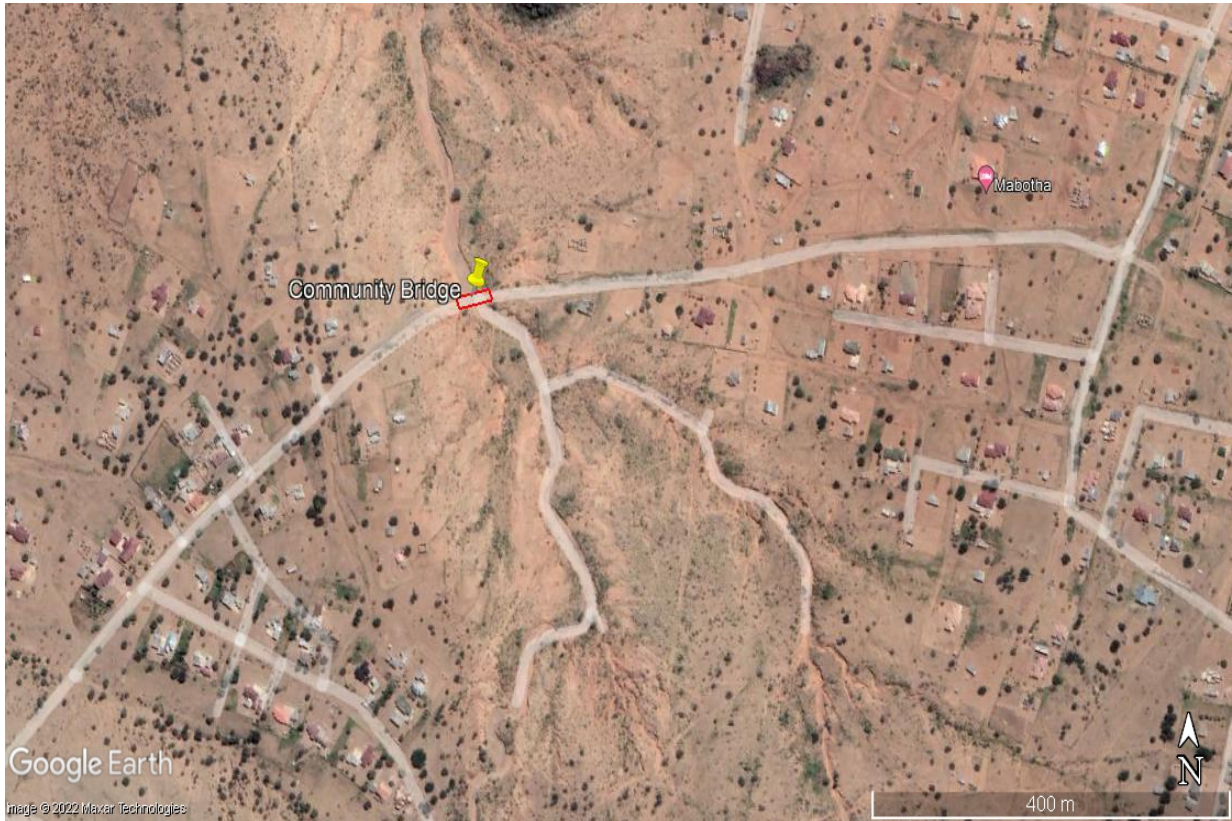
A few sites with cultural heritage material (archaeological) were identified in the larger area & close to the proposed development (bridge) site during the assessment. These finds and recommended mitigation measures will be discussed in the following sections.



**Figure 1: General location of the study & proposed Community Bridge development (Google Earth 2022).**



**Figure 2: Closer view of the location of the proposed Community Bridge (Google Earth 2022).**



**Figure 3: Another view of the location and footprint of the proposed bridge (Google Earth 2022).**

## 6. DISCUSSION

The Stone Age is the period in human history when lithic (stone) material was mainly used to produce tools. In South Africa the Stone Age can be divided into basically three periods. It is however important to note that dates are relative and only provide a broad framework for interpretation. A basic sequence for the South African Stone Age (Lombard et.al 2012) is as follows:

Earlier Stone Age (ESA) up to 2 million – more than 200 000 years ago

Middle Stone Age (MSA) less than 300 000 – 20 000 years ago

Later Stone Age (LSA) 40 000 years ago – 2000 years ago

It should also be noted that these dates are not a neat fit because of variability and overlapping ages between sites (Lombard et.al 2012: 125).

No known Stone Age sites or artifacts are present in the specific study area, while some sites are known from the larger geographical area (Pistorius 2008; Coetzee 2017; Pelsers et.al 2010; Pelsers 2017 & 2019). Most of these sites are however open-air surface sites located in and around erosion dongas. These tools date to between the Early and Middle Stone Ages mainly. Some Stone Age material was identified in the area during an October 2021

assessment for the Bokoni Platinum Mine Rapholo River Rehabilitation Project, not far from the proposed Community Bridge development (Pelser 2021: 14-21).

**Some Stone Age sites or material were identified close to the proposed bridge development site and footprint during the June 2022 assessment.**

The Iron Age is the name given to the period of human history when metal was mainly used to produce metal artifacts. In South Africa it can be divided in two separate phases (Bergh 1999: 96-98), namely:

Early Iron Age (EIA) 200 – 1000 A.D  
Late Iron Age (LIA) 1000 – 1850 A.D.

Huffman (2007: xiii) however indicates that a Middle Iron Age should be included. His dates, which now seem to be widely accepted in archaeological circles, are:

Early Iron Age (EIA) 250 – 900 A.D.  
Middle Iron Age (MIA) 900 – 1300 A.D.  
Late Iron Age (LIA) 1300 – 1840 A.D.

There are a number of known Iron Age sites in the larger area geographical area, identified and recorded during previous surveys (Roodt 2002 & 2003; Pistorius 2008; Karodia 2013; Coetzee 2017). These sites were located mostly around the foothills of the mountain range and hills in the area. Some Iron Age material (undecorated pottery fragments) was also found during the October 2021 assessment for the Bokoni Platinum Mine Rapholo River Rehabilitation Project (Pelser 2021: 14-21).

**A single undecorated piece of pottery fragment was found close to the bridge development footprint, while a decorated piece of pottery was recovered from the stream bed a few hundred meters away. This is evidence for the presence of Iron Age sites in the area.**

The historical age started with the first recorded oral histories in the area. It includes the moving into the area of people that were able to read and write. The first European group to pass close by the area was that of Schoon in 1836, followed by the Voortrekkers from the 1840's onwards (Bergh 1999: 13-14).

A large number of archaeological/historical sites are located in the Tjate Valley (a few km's south of the study area). The Tjate Valley was declared a Provincial Heritage Site in 2007. A Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment was undertaken by Kusel (2008) on the Provincial Heritage site, followed by an assessment of an prospecting area on the farms Djate 249 KT, Fernkloof 539 KS and Quartzhill 542 KS. The area hosts two Royal Capitals of the Ba-Pedi people – the Sekhukhune and the Sekwati capitals. There are also Iron Age sites dating from approximately AD 700, as well as potentially an ancient copper mine. The first Berlin Mission Station and school in Sekhukhune were built in the Tjate Valley. In 1879 the valley was the scene of the Sekhukhune War between the Ba-Pedi and the British. Numerous sites

associated with the battle are still visible and the battle is well documented. Rock art exists on the northern border of the declared site. There are a number of sacred sites and 26 cemeteries. Pistorius (2008) and Coetzee (2017) recorded a number of recent historical sites (including the remains of recent dwellings and cemeteries) in the larger area during previous surveys.

***No historical sites, features or material were identified in the study area during the June 2022 assessment.***

The oldest map obtained from the Chief Surveyor General Database ([www.csg.dla.gov.za](http://www.csg.dla.gov.za)) for the farm Middelpunt 420KS dates to 1892 (**CSG Document 1009BB01**). It shows that the farm was then numbered as No.20 and was situated in the District of Lydenburg, Ward of Steelpoort, Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (Z.A.R). The farm was surveyed in November 1889 for the Government of the Z.A.R.

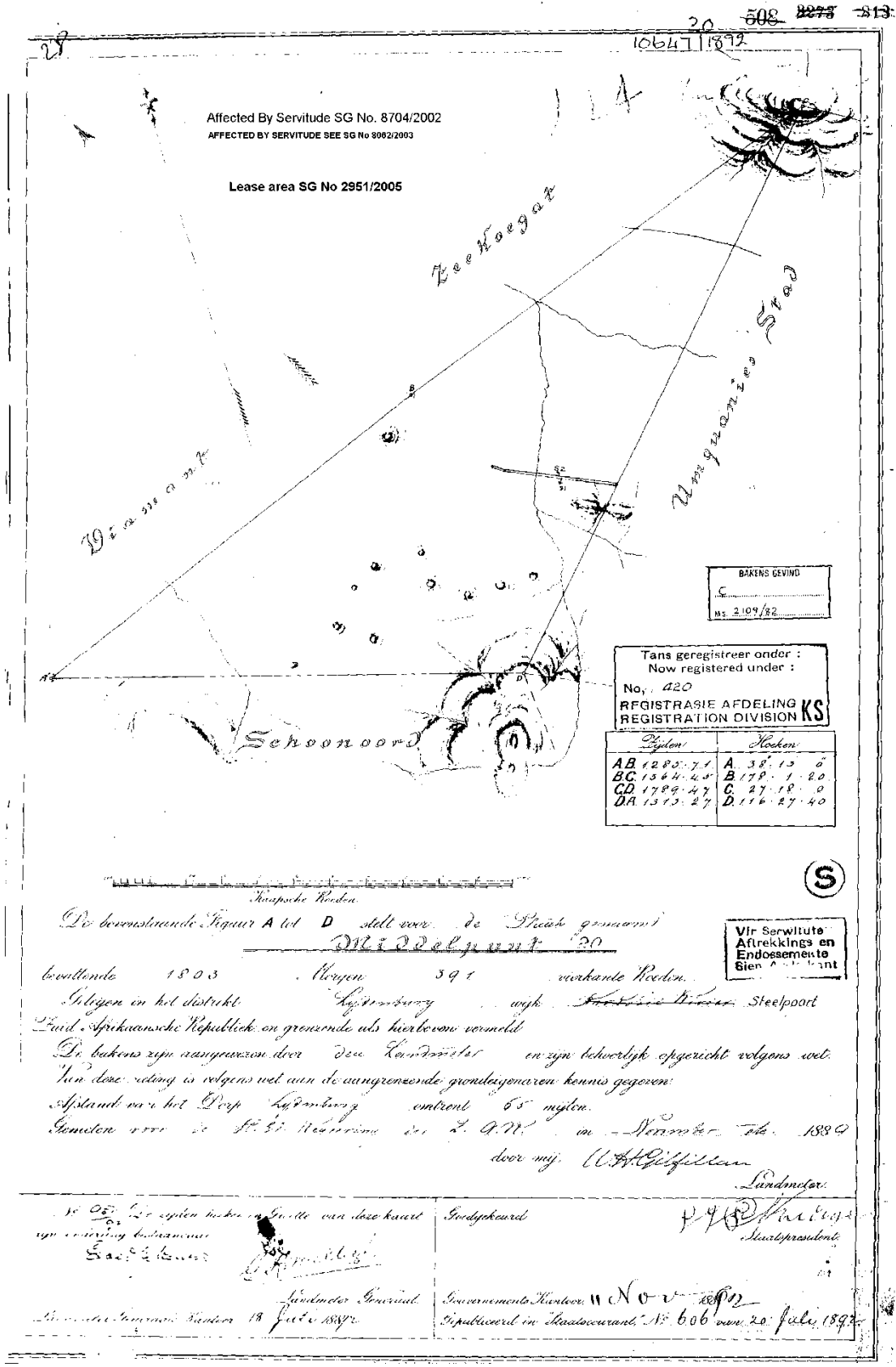


Figure 4: 1892 map for Middelpunt 420KS ([www.csg.dla.gov.za](http://www.csg.dla.gov.za)).

## Results of the June 2022 Field Assessment

Although scatters of Stone Age material (stone tools) were noticed in the erosion dongas in the larger area surrounding the study & development site, these were not documented as they will not be directly impacted by the proposed Community Bridge construction project. However, a few scatters of material were found close to and in the general area of the bridge footprint. These “sites” include MSA/LSA stone tools, as well as some undecorated Iron Age pottery. The sites (finds) are situated in the erosion dongas and channels on the bank of the stream where the bridge will be constructed, and even though they are not of very High Significance, they will be directly impacted by the proposed development. There is also a possibility that in situ (and invisible subterranean) cultural material deposits will be exposed by the bridge development activities.

The single piece of decorated Iron Age pottery found in the stream bed some distance away from the development site provides a relative date for the Iron Age of the general area. The piece of a rim is decorated with a red ochre burnish, with a band of incised lines on the body and punctates on the rim. This piece is likely from a bowl. Based on Huffman’s research it is possible that this decorated rim fragment is part of the Urewe Iron Age Tradition (Moloko Branch) and so-called Icon facies. This would date it to between AD1300 & AD1500 (Huffman 2007: 183-185).

Although the scatters of material found do not have a very high density, diminishing their significance, the following is recommended due to the fact that there will be a direct impact on them through the proposed Community Bridge development:

1. The sampling of representative surface material (Stone Age tools and possible further Iron Age pottery & other material) from the area prior to development commencing. This will assist in providing a relative date for the Stone Age & Iron Age use of and settlement in the area. For this an archaeological sampling permit will be required from SAHRA

**GPS Location of Sites:** S24 17 46.60 E29 50 34.80 (Site 1); S24 17 47.60 E29 50 35.70 (Site 2) and S24 17 46.50 E29 50 36.10 (Site 3)

**Cultural Significance:** Low to medium

**Heritage Significance:** Grade III: Other heritage resources of local importance and therefore worthy of conservation.

**Field Ratings:** General protection B (IV B): site should be recorded before destruction (medium significance)

**Mitigation:** See Above



**Figure 5: General view of the larger study area with erosion dongas & the stream bed visible.**



**Figure 6: Some stone tools in the larger area.**





**Figure 7: A view of the crossing where the Bokoni Community Bridge construction is proposed.**



**Figure 8: Another view of the site. Scatters of archaeological material occur on top of the stream bank and in the erosion dongas on both side of the crossing.**



**Figure 9: MSA/LSA material at Site 1.**



**Figure 10: A Stone Age core and an undecorated Iron Age pottery fragment (Site 2).**



**Figure 11: MSA/LSA material at Site 3.**



**Figure 12: The decorated pottery fragment from the area.**



**Figure 13: Image showing the Community Bridge position and footprint in relation to the archaeological material scatters recorded (Google Earth 2022).**

## **7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) was appointed by Red Kite Environmental Solutions (Pty) Ltd to conduct a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge Project. The proposed development & study area is located on a portion of the farm Middelpunt 420KS, north of Lebowakgomo and in the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

Background research indicates that there are some cultural heritage (archaeological & historical) sites and features in the larger geographical area within which the study area falls, while some sites with an archaeological origin & significance were identified and recorded in the study area and proposed development site boundaries. These are represented by scatters of material situated close to and in the general area of the bridge footprint. These “sites” include MSA/LSA stone tools, as well as some undecorated Iron Age pottery. The sites, even though they are not of very high significance, will be directly impacted by the proposed development. There is also a possibility that in situ (and invisible subterranean) cultural material deposits will be exposed by the bridge development activities.

The single piece of decorated Iron Age pottery found in the stream bed some distance away from the development site provides a relative date for the Iron Age of the general area. Based on Huffman’s research it is possible that this decorated rim fragment is part of the

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The following is recommended:

1. The sampling of representative surface material (Stone Age tools and possible further Iron Age pottery & other material) from the area prior to development commencing. This will assist in providing a relative date for the Stone Age & Iron Age use of and settlement in the area. For this an archaeological sampling permit will be required from SAHRA

**From a Cultural Heritage point of view it can be concluded that the proposed Bokoni Platinum Mine Community Bridge development can be allowed to continue, once the recommendations provided above has been implemented.**

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## **APPENDIX A: DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

**Site:** A large place with extensive structures and related cultural objects. It can also be a large assemblage of cultural artifacts, found on a single location.

**Structure:** A permanent building found in isolation or which forms a site in conjunction with other structures.

**Feature:** A coincidental find of movable cultural objects.

**Object:** Artifact (cultural object).

(Also see Knudson 1978: 20).



## **APPENDIX B: DEFINITION/ STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

**Historic value:** Important in the community or pattern of history or has an association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in history.

**Aesthetic value:** Important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.

**Scientific value:** Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of natural or cultural history or is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement of a particular period

**Social value:** Have a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

**Rarity:** Does it possess uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of natural or cultural heritage.

**Representivity:** Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of natural or cultural places or object or a range of landscapes or environments characteristic of its class or of human activities (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique) in the environment of the nation, province region or locality.

## **APPENDIX C: SIGNIFICANCE AND FIELD RATING:**

### **Cultural significance:**

- Low: A cultural object being found out of context, not being part of a site or without any related feature/structure in its surroundings.
- Medium: Any site, structure or feature being regarded less important due to a number of factors, such as date and frequency. Also any important object found out of context.
- High: Any site, structure or feature regarded as important because of its age or uniqueness. Graves are always categorized as of a high importance. Also any important object found within a specific context.

### **Heritage significance:**

- Grade I: Heritage resources with exceptional qualities to the extent that they are of national significance
- Grade II: Heritage resources with qualities giving it provincial or regional importance although it may form part of the national estate
- Grade III: Other heritage resources of local importance and therefore worthy of conservation

### **Field ratings:**

- i. National Grade I significance: should be managed as part of the national estate
- ii. Provincial Grade II significance: should be managed as part of the provincial estate
- iii. Local Grade IIIA: should be included in the heritage register and not be mitigated (high significance)
- iv. Local Grade IIIB: should be included in the heritage register and may be mitigated (high/medium significance)
- v. General protection A (IV A): site should be mitigated before destruction (high/medium significance)
- vi. General protection B (IV B): site should be recorded before destruction (medium significance)
- vii. General protection C (IV C): phase 1 is seen as sufficient recording and it may be demolished (low significance)

## **APPENDIX D: PROTECTION OF HERITAGE RESOURCES:**

### **Formal protection:**

National heritage sites and Provincial heritage sites – Grade I and II

Protected areas - An area surrounding a heritage site

Provisional protection – For a maximum period of two years

Heritage registers – Listing Grades II and III

Heritage areas – Areas with more than one heritage site included

Heritage objects – e.g. Archaeological, palaeontological, meteorites, geological specimens, visual art, military, numismatic, books, etc.

### **General protection:**

Objects protected by the laws of foreign states

Structures – Older than 60 years

Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites

Burial grounds and graves

Public monuments and memorials

## **APPENDIX E: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PHASES**

1. Pre-assessment or Scoping Phase – Establishment of the scope of the project and terms of reference.
2. Baseline Assessment – Establishment of a broad framework of the potential heritage of an area.
3. Phase I Impact Assessment – Identifying sites, assess their significance, make comments on the impact of the development and makes recommendations for mitigation or conservation.
4. Letter of recommendation for exemption – If there is no likelihood that any sites will be impacted.
5. Phase II Mitigation or Rescue – Planning for the protection of significant sites or sampling through excavation or collection (after receiving a permit) of sites that may be lost.
6. Phase III Management Plan – For rare cases where sites are so important that development cannot be allowed.