Ankerlig – Omega substations
walk down report

(Conducted at the request of Eskom in fulfilment of the recommendations of a prior EIA process)

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Executive summary

ACO Associates cc was appointed on 9 June 2015 by Environmental Impact Management Services (Pty) Ltd (EIMS) to conduct a walk down of the final proposed alignment for a new 400kV power line between the Ankerlig and Omega substations in the Western Cape. This walk down was commissioned by Eskom SOE in fulfilment of the recommendations following out of a prior Environmental Impact Assessment process.

The findings of the walk down are that only a single archaeological site is situated near the route. This can easily be protected during construction by making it a no go area for any activity. It will not require any repositioning of towers.

The tree line adjacent to the Mamre Road is historic but a portion will need to be felled to allow for the powerline crossing. But since a Record of Decision has been made by HWC to approve the project it is no longer necessary to apply for a permit to remove the trees.

Introduction

ACO Associates cc was appointed on 9 June 2015 by Environmental Impact Management Services (Pty) Ltd (EIMS) to conduct a walk down of the final proposed alignment for a new 400kV power line between the Ankerlig and Omega substations in the Western Cape.

This walk down was commissioned by Eskom SOE in fulfilment of the recommendations following out of a prior Environmental Impact Assessment process. The following pages contain the results of the findings of the walk down and any recommendations that have arisen from a heritage point of view.

Methodology

Before the physical walk down, we compared the final proposed power line route with data from previous projects undertaken by ACO Associates cc. We have extensive knowledge of the area and some parts of the proposed route had already been covered by previous fieldwork. For these parts, this walk down served as a confirmation of current knowledge. This was especially the case for the section around and just south of the Ankerlig substation[1] and the area around the Omega substation[2].

Figure 1

On 12 and 13 August 2015, the proposed route was followed from Ankerlig to Omega substation and almost every proposed pylon position was visited on foot. Tracks were recorded with a handheld gps (Fig. 1) and photographs were taken.

[1] Halkett, D. 2012, Heritage Impact Assessment as part of the EIA (Basic Assessment): proposed Dassenberg – Koeberg double circuit 132kV overhead line, Western Cape (report prepared for SiVEST) and Hart, T. 2014, Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed construction of 132 kV transmission lines between Ankerlig power station (Atlantis) and Koeberg, Western Cape (report prepared for Savannah Environmental).

[2] Orton, J. & Hart, T. 2004, Heritage scoping study of the farm Groot Oliphantskop (farm 81) for the proposed Omega substation, Western Cape (report prepared for Eyethu Engineers).

Findings

The proposed final power line route follows an existing overhead line with associated servitude. It traverses open space covered by alien vegetation but, nevertheless, near Ankerlig substation the landscape still contains some relic dunes. The southern half of the power line crosses land that was previously ploughed.

The ground surface was mostly heavily covered with leaf litter and vegetation thus restricting visibility. We often had to rely on inspection of mole hopes to get a sense if any archaeological material was present.

Along the proposed power line, we only observed one archaeological site. Indicated in Figure 1 (way point 010) is a low density shell midden situated on one of the remaining fossil dunes. (Fig 2) It is unknown so far how deep the deposit goes, but it is relatively wide spread over the top and slope of the dune. This site is situated on the edge of the current existing servitude associated with the existing power line.

Figure 2

A second heritage feature is the avenue of blue gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) trees lining Mamre Road alongside the Omega substation. (Fig 3) Tree avenues like these are protected under the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999). It is a fact that this tree line has already been intersected for the existing power line when the Omega substation was built. Eskom advised us that the power line currently being proposed will have to follow this specific alignment to enter the substation the correct way. This does mean that the gap between the two sections of the tree avenue will be made wider and the contact between the two sections might be lost.

Figure 3

Recommendations

The recommendations with regards to the heritage aspect on this project are rather limited, both in number as in scope.

For the shell midden on the dune, as it is positioned so near an existing servitude, we expect the impact to be minimal as long as the following measure is put in place: the dune, for a radius of 50 meter from the top, is declared a no-go area. This means that no road can go over the dune, the area cannot be used as a lay-down area during construction, nor can it be used as a lunch-break / rest area for personnel. The dune and site will probably become part of the new servitude, and then it needs to be guarded against too rigorous removal of alien vegetation so as not to disturb the archaeological deposit.

With regards to the blue gum tree avenue: even though tree avenues are protected un the NHRA, since a Record of Decision has been made by HWC to approve the project it is no longer necessary to apply for a permit to remove the trees.

As a general note, it needs to be added here that one needs to be aware of the possibility that human burials can occur anywhere on the landscape, especially in sandy, coastal areas. At the first sign or suspicion of human remains being encountered, the work in that area needs to be halted; the area cordoned off and a qualified archaeologist needs to be notified. An assessment will need to be made on site as to the meaning and importance of the find and the correct way forward.