

Expression of Interest

Sehlabathebe National Park Tourism Concession – Kingdom of Lesotho

SNP HERITAGE CENTRE

PLEASE NOTE: This document merely serves to inform interested parties wishing to express interest in the operation of a tourism venture in the Sehlabathebe National Park. No contractual obligations, expectations and/or rights may be derived from this document. The Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation reserves the right not to award any concession/lease and/or change the process and opportunities described in this document at any time it feels entitled to do so.

Introduction

The Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, duly authorised by the Lesotho Ministry of Tourism, Environment & Culture, seeks to enhance the benefits from tourism for the Kingdom and her people by establishing market-related tourism ventures in and around Lesotho's natural and cultural resource base.

To this extent, the Ministry and the LTDC have reached an agreement to seek the services of a reputable, quality entrepreneur to manage and operate the Sehlabathebe Heritage Centre within the boundaries of the Sehlabathebe National Park.

Description

The Sehlabathebe National Park is Lesotho's only proclaimed national park and forms the southernmost section of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation area where it shares a 12 km intersection on the border with uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park - World Heritage Site (UDP-WHS) in South Africa. Following its legal proclamation in 2001, it is presently declared a Transfrontier park with the Garden Castle Reserve section of UDP-WHS. The western part of the park is bordered by a cluster of 14 villages which are part of the greater Khomo-Phats'oa Community Council – a 46ha resource area with a community council-endorsed natural and cultural heritage management plan.



SNP is uplifted relative to the rest of the Drakensberg escarpment, leading to a very unique outcrop of Clarens Sandstone formation. The park stands at an average height of 2,450m above sea level with impressive geology ranging from late Triassic (215-195 million years) Elliot formations to early Jurassic (195-183 million years) Clarens formations which account for the abundant cream-coloured sandstone. The valleys of Sehlabathebe are filled with sandy

alluvial material, sometimes interceded with layers of dolerite or basaltic boulders making it an ideal hiking area.

The vegetation is classified as Themeda-Festuca Alpine veld: high altitude, short grasslands consisting of a mixture of sub-tropical temperate grass species with a wide variety of bushes and scrubs. With its total 6500ha park size, a tourism concessionaire will benefit from a unique attraction base characterised by:

- The fact that it is an internationally recognised National Park and forms part of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Park, a World Heritage Site. Separate World Heritage Site and Ramsar Site proclamation has been applied for.
- Spectacular natural scenery, including Devil's Knuckles buttness, the overhanging mountain of Kepising and Tsoelikane Waterfall.
- Interesting Afro-Alpine vegetation and wetlands with many endemic species of significance. For example, the rare endemic Sehlabathebe Waterlily which was once thought to be extinct is confined to the tarns and pools within the Park.
- The Maloti Minnow, which is endemic to the mountain streams of Lesotho and critically endangered, is found in the Tsoelikane River that runs through the Park.
- High number of avifauna species in one area. There are good populations of Bearded Vulture as well as high altitude endemics such as Orange Breasted Rock Jumper, Drakensberg Siskin and Mountain Pipit. There are many grassland specials, such as the Yellow Breasted Pipit and the Yellow Romped Widow.
- Over 65 San Rock Art sites, and numerous historical sites such as herder shelters that have been built into dramatic sandstone hangs by Basotho herders in the early 20th century when the area was still used for summer grazing.

Location and access



Close to the border town of Qacha's Nek (district capital), a mountainous gravel road winds its way east via Waterfall and Ramatseliso's gate to Sehlabathebe and the park entrance (totalling some 90km on district road B45). An alternative but more challenging connection exists via Matebeng and Sehonghong which requires a 4x4 all year round. Road access within the park includes pipe culverts, rock backfill and concrete slabs where watercourses cross the road. This existing road bisects the northern section of the park, ending at the Nkonkoana Gate. No other roads accessible by car exist in the park but an extensive network of bridle tracks covers the complete park area. The fence around the park is being improved by government.

Access is influenced by general high weather phenomena such as heavy rain, snow, fog and low hanging clouds which can make road use challenging at times. For general logistical support to a tourism operation, it is anticipated that all supplies will have to be driven in from a long distance.

Telephone infrastructure by Lesotho's network is currently being constructed at Sehlabathebe village but access to South African mobile networks is already available at selected hill tops. The Heritage Centre will be connected to the park entrance gate by phone and data-line.

The general infrastructure therefore offers sufficient support to the Mountain Resort operation while at the same time maintaining the adventurous, wilderness character of the park.

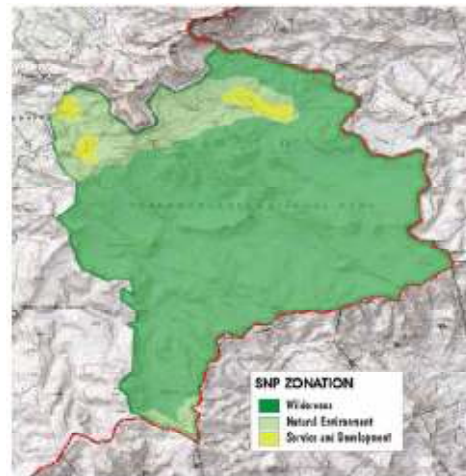
Tenure and management

The overall mission of the Sehlabathebe National Park is **to develop the park in harmony with nature and to contribute to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of the park in such a manner that the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho will benefit from and share in its diversity, economic value and the opportunities for spiritual well-being and recreation that it offers.**

The park management plan includes demarcated zones and a code of conduct for tourism operations. These are both reliant on the shape and contents of the tourism concession and need to be finalised in detail once the interest of operators has been established.

Access to the park outside the control of the concessionaire will be allowed in pre-determined areas and primarily to accommodate international visitors at the SNP Mountain Resort.

The prospective concessionaire will manage (and possibly expand) the SNP Heritage Centre and a traversing area for pre-determined educational activities held in concession by the community. The user rights will be vested in an exclusive lease agreement valid for a proposed 10 years.



Management concept

Situated close to the entrance gate, the Heritage Centre will primarily target local residents and educational/spiritual gatherings to the park. The government seeks a partner who is experienced and able to develop and manage an educational, heritage tourism experience in this highly attractive area, to serve as catalyst for environmental and heritage knowledge for and about Lesotho and her people. The centre comprises the following: a dormitory type accommodation with communal ablutions, and chalets with en-suite ablutions. There is a communal eating area with kitchen and ablutions, as well as the Educational Areas that will make provision for indoor and external displays, display cabinets and areas with static and interactive designs with a screen where movies or presentations can be projected. It will also have an external display area where models and other artefacts will be displayed.

Visitor accommodation is multi-functional and incorporates following:

- A total of 18 dormitory rooms, each consisting of rectangular and round buildings with two or three rooms each, build in typical village style with thatched roofs. Each room is large enough to accommodate 2 x double bunk beds, with a basic, open-plan kitchen (wash-up area, two plate gas stove, fridge) and table & chairs for 4 persons. A solar geyser (will be installed to provide hot water per building.



- 2 x communal ablution each consisting of a male (2 x toilets, 2 x urinals, 2x showers, 3 x basins) and female (3 x toilets, 2 x showers, 3 x basins). Solar geysers with gas as back-up system will be installed.
- A paraplegic ablution is attached to the one ablution (nearest the central facilities) and it consists of a toilet, bath and basin.
- A Laundry is attached against the other ablution, consisting of washing troughs, and provision for 2 washing machines and 2 tumble dryers, with washing line in courtyard.
- The Group Leader unit makes provision for 2 rooms with 2 beds each, with space for table and 2 chairs in each room. It offers a shared ablution consisting of bath, shower, toilet, basin and solar geyser as well as one shared open plan kitchen consisting of wash-up, two-plate gas stove and fridge.



Visitor facilities are designed to accommodate groups in comfort throughout the year:

- A communal dining room area, with space for some 76 persons (approximately 100 m²). The unit is facing the mountain, with deck and doors opening onto the deck. A

heating system to the dining room by means of hot water circulated to finned radiator units, heated by a boiler or incorporated in the kitchen stove (coal stove as alternative to gas stoves). The dining room has its own toilet facility.

- The dining room is serviced from a kitchen of $\pm 20 \text{ m}^2$ equipped for basic group catering including 2 x box freezers, 2 x fridges (electrical with hold-over plates), 2 x gas or coal stoves, gas geyser, wash-up area, working surfaces and a store facility of $\pm 16 \text{ m}^2$.

The educational area forms the heart of the centre. It is the same size as the dining room (approximately 100 m^2), and the interior is designed by a consultant and will consist of the following:

- Cabinets or recessed areas against back internal wall, which will house static and dynamic or interactive displays.
- A 4x3 m screen/wall where movies or presentations can be projected on.
- An external display with models and other displays, including rock art.
- The floor space will be multi-use with tables and chairs that can be placed in configurations as required.
- The front of the building has large glass windows incorporating the natural rocks as well as the view.

General Infrastructure provisions include following:

- A day facility for staff (10 persons) where they can eat and rest. It incorporates a security guard room and staff ablution (toilet, basin, urinal and shower).
- A gravel entrance road ($\pm 800\text{m}$) from the existing road with turning circle for busses and vehicles and parking for 2 x busses and ± 20 sedan vehicles.
- Storm-water drainage for the centre terrain.
- Provision for all grey water (bath & showers) to be filtered and drained into wetland. Other liquid waste will go through a septic tank and gravitate to a reed-bed system, which will overflow into the wetland.
- Walkways (gravel) connect all facilities, and also give access to the external lookout point.
- Power will be by means of a generator/ solar hybrid system, with conventional electrical reticulation. The generators are designed to run a maximum of 8 hours per day with full camp, and will charge the batteries and drive the base load (fridges, freezers and other high load units). During off-peak times, the solar system should provide sufficient power. The generator room is placed to ensure minimum noise impacts, and includes a 3000 l underground diesel tank which is accessible to a diesel truck. A cable will be installed to provide power to the Arrival Centre.
- Water supply will be by means of springs and reservoirs (underground due to visual impediment and temperature).
- Solid waste will be stored in sealed containers, and removed to the waste site outside the National Park, where it will be sorted into recyclable waste (glass, tins and paper), wet waste and non-recyclable dry waste. The wet waste will be buried, while dry non-



recyclable waste will be burned in an incinerator. All recyclable waste will be stored in wire cages, cages, until sufficient volume exist so that it can be removed to companies to re-cycle.

In addition, the LTDC expects the concessionaire to play an active and vital role in the promotion of Lesotho as a tourism destination through the provision of quality promotional materials in print and via electronic media.

Close cooperation with the community situated around the national park is expected from the prospective operator. The incorporation of the rich Basotho culture as part of the visitor experience through visits and interaction with the



communities in a respectful and meaningful way is encouraged. It is further expected that human resources for staff operations are selected and trained from among local residents and that income-generating opportunities through the provision of products and services to the Centre operation are encouraged.

The development and operation of the SNP Heritage Centre holds tremendous opportunities for the prospective concessionaire, as it is a ready built facility is a highly attractive area.

The Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, the contracting partner to the prospective concessionaire, will assist in improving the enabling environment for a tourism operator in the Park by addressing the issue of access to the Park through the Nkonkoana Gate and intensively marketing the



destination at regional and international tourism travel and trade fairs.

Concession ideas

The LTDC is open to any suggestions on how to operate and expand the Centre and the products and services it will offer.

As the Government of Lesotho has commissioned several studies in recent years aimed at giving substantiated guidance to the development of tourism in the country, the following priorities have been identified:

Proposed Heritage Centre business structure	
Type	Single operator with a 10-15 year lease contract depending on market establishment, track record and financial offer.
Facilities	As provided by government. Possible capacity increase if approved by park management and based on occupancy figures.
Asset control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assume full responsibility for effective management and profitable operation of the facility. - To furnish the facility to the standards suitable for the clientele envisaged for the facility. - Provide up-to-standard accommodation and associated services to tourists - Maintain the facility in the best physical status - Market the facility and surrounding attractions to increase the flow of tourists in the area
Exclusive rights	Exclusive commercial use of the Heritage Centre based on sub-lease agreement.
Activities	Educational activities for day and overnight visitors as well as provision of research facilities approved by park management. Educational activities offered should comprise of a mixture of passive (displays, movies) and active (guided walks, interactive displays) opportunities.
Heritage components	All Heritage & educational activities must incorporate: natural and cultural resources of the Maloti; people's history of the area; history of the park; archaeology; rock art; climate and climate changes; carbon footprints.
Co-management	Lease of community concession area, staff training and maintenance of utilities (water – fresh & waste) across the traversing area.
Government contribution	Government of Lesotho undertakes to provide and maintain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A staffed entrance gate - A staffed arrival centre/reception - Appropriate park fence
National scope	International exposure for Lesotho through an innovative, high-

	quality cohesive heritage experience.
Fees	Apart from a lease fee (to be determined for the centre's site and activity concession), a bed-night levy of M10 per person per night will be applicable. A Park entrance fee will be applicable for all visitors, payable to Park management. A crown lease will be payable annually at M10/m².

Expression of Interest

Interested parties should submit the following completed Expression of Interest Form by one of following means:

[1] As a completed, signed and scanned PDF file sent to: cmokuku@pcs.org.ls

OR

[2] As a completed and signed form sent by mail to:

The Project Manager
Private Sector Competitiveness Project
P.O. Box 747
Maseru 100
Lesotho

OR

[3] As a completed and signed form sent by courier to:

LTDC

Att: Project Manager
Private Sector Competitiveness Project
4th Floor LNDC Centre
Kingsway Road
Maseru
Lesotho

The government of Lesotho will select a short list of applications and invite selected parties to a formal closed bidding process and contract negotiations.

For further information please contact:

Tel: +266 22312238
Email: ltdc@ltdc.org.ls



Expression of Interest SNP HERITAGE CENTRE

File:

A. Applicant Details

Applicant (company/individual in full)

Legal Status
(tick)

Individual

Company

Trust

Other

(attach proof of legal status)

Other - please specify full details

Trading Name

(if different from above)

Contact Person

Postal Address

Residential Address

Registered Office of Business

Full Names of Directors

Required to Sign

Phone (B)

Website

Phone (B)

Fax

Cell Phone

E-mail

F. Description of experience in community cooperation in tourism

What are the experience and approach to community involvement in tourism? Please describe in detail. *If more space is needed, attach details and label F.*

G. Description of market control

What market segments are targeted and what approach is likely to create demand for the SNP product? Please describe in detail. *If more space is needed, attach details and label G.*

H. Details of proposed exhibitions

J. Declaration

I certify that the information provided in this application form and attached additional information is, to the best of my knowledge, true and correct.

Signature
(Applicant)

Date

Signature (Witness)

Date

Witness Name

Witness Address

The LTDC and the Ministry reserve the right to obtain further information either from the applicant or from any other relevant source. The applicant will be advised of any information obtained from other sources. No rights may be obtained from lodging this Expression of Interest. The LTDC reserves the right not to award any concession rights.

Office Use Only

Date on which application received: ____/____/____.
