



Expression of Interest 1

Sehlabathebe National Park Tourism Concession – Kingdom of Lesotho

SNP MOUNTAIN RESORT

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 tourism entrepreneur to establish and operate a Mountain Resort within the boundaries of the Sehlabathebe National Park.

Description

The Sehlabathebe Nation 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.
- It is located at the head of one of the few border crossings up the Drakensberg escarpment and into Lesotho, allowing for controlled, direct access from RSA.
- The remoteness of the Park and the peace and tranquillity that it offers.
- Spectacular natural scenery, including Devil's Knuckles butte, the overhanging mountain of Keping 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.
- An established network of bridle tracks.

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. The Nkonkoana border gate accessing RSA (Bushman's Nek) from within the park will become operational for controlled, authentic tourism traffic. The winding roads have a gravel surface and traverse numerous mountaintops, contributing to the adventurous and isolated image of the area.

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.

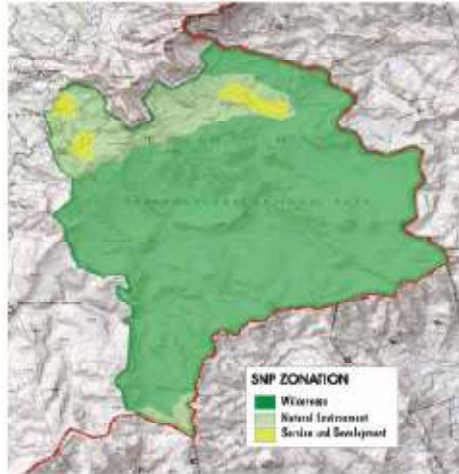
Access is influenced by general high weather phenomena such as heavy rain, snow, fog and low hanging clouds which can make road use challenging at times. For general logistical support to a tourism operation, it is anticipated that all supplies will have to be driven in from a long distance.

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 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 local residents and educational/spiritual gatherings for which a Heritage Centre has been constructed close to the entrance gate.

The prospective concessionaire will be offered a site (around GPS coordinates 29,869S, 29,117E) for a Mountain Resort development and the use of a traversing area for pre-determined nature activities held in concession by the community. The user rights will be vested in an exclusive lease agreement valid for 15 - 30 years depending on the kind of operation proposed and the experience of the applicant. The concessionaire will design and construct approved facilities and operate them for the duration of the agreement, after which the fixed assets will revert to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Development concept

The government seeks a partner who is experienced and able to develop a complete tourism experience in this highly attractive area, comprising the following:

- An accommodation establishment (Mountain Resort) that reflects the natural beauty of the area and conforms to the highest international standards, thereby profiling Lesotho internationally as a quality destination. Quality camping facilities should also be considered.
- A variety of nature-based activities able to attract a broad range of interests, from (amongst others) hiking, birding, fishing and mountain biking to educational activities, in partnership with the community owning the traversing area concession.
- Provision of food and beverage for guests.
- An innovative, ecologically sensitive mountain accommodation that reflects the environmental and biodiversity conservation challenges of our times.

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 neighbouring communities in a respectful and meaningful way is encouraged. It is further expected that human resources for tourism operations are selected and trained from among local residents and that income-generating opportunities through the provision of products and services to the tourism operation are encouraged. It is anticipated that the community trust will be compensated for the use of their tourism activity concession in the park.



The development and operation of the SNP Mountain Resort holds tremendous opportunities for the prospective concessionaire, as it has a ready, active and oriented market close by in South Africa.

The Maloti-Drakensberg attracts many South African visitors, with up-market establishments recording 64% occupancy levels and 60% of the visitors originating from the RSA. This is a market constantly on the look-out for new destinations, for which the Sehlabathebe National Park is ideal. With its diverse resource base, the concessionaire will attract a wide variety of interested visitors and can therefore expect healthy occupancy levels throughout the year. In addition, the Mountain Resort will benefit from transit traffic between the border and Maseru, accessible to visitors with a minimum stay of two nights in the park.

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 shape and operate the proposed concession and the products 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 mountain resort business structure	
Type	Single operator with a minimum 15-, maximum 30-year contract depending on market establishment, track record and financial offer.
Facilities	Minimum of 10-unit (20-bed) fixed en-suite accommodation built in synergy with the resource base. Final capacity determined by Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) limitations. Environmentally friendly utilities provision. Possible capacity increase if approved by park management and based on occupancy figures.
Asset control	Build, operate and transfer of all fixed assets at end of contract and in line with maintenance plan.
Exclusive rights	Exclusive commercial tourism use of the mountain resort based on sub-lease agreement. Right of admission for day visits controlled by resort operator.
Activities	To be sourced from community concessions.
Other facilities	Camp site.
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 - Four trout dams - Appropriate park fence
National scope	International exposure for Lesotho through an innovative, high-quality cohesive wilderness experience.
Fees	Apart from a lease fee (to be determined for the resort site and activity concession), a bed-night levy of M25 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/m ² .

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:

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 MOUNTAIN RESORT

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

B. Background experience of applicant

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.*



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: ____/____/____.
