



tourism

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2017 Local Government Tourism Conference deliberations on Integrated Tourism Planning

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More than seven hundred sector stakeholders and officials from all spheres of government and private sector headed the call to improve tourism planning at local government level as they attended the Local Government Tourism Conference (LGTC) that took place from 03 to 04 April at Emperors Palace in Ekurhuleni.

Themed “Tourism planning is everybody’s business,” the conference deliberated on the state of the sector and how integrated planning can improve tourism delivery at a local government level. Addressing delegates at the conference, Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa emphasised the strategic importance of the outcomes of the event in building a sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.

“Tourism can only succeed when it is prioritised and included in the strategies of all three spheres of government. This conference will offer you practical skills on making a business case for tourism in the Integrated Development Plan, developing a basic tourism plan, developing a bankable tourism project funding proposal and co-operative governance to enhance tourism integration,” said Xasa.

Tourism contributes R1 18 928 million (3%) to the South African Gross Domestic Product, and has created more than 700 000 (4.5%) direct employment opportunities. Despite this, transformation of the sector has been slow with less than 30% of Exempted Micro Enterprises, Qualifying Small Enterprises and Large Enterprises meeting the targets for ownership, management control, employment equity, preferential procurement, enterprise development and skills development.

“The transformation of our sector is imperative in promoting inclusivity. As the drivers of the Integrated Development Plan and Local Economic Development programmes, Local Government is a critical stakeholder that will enable us to implement the initiatives that will transform the sector and promote responsible tourism practices for the economic benefit of our people,” added Xasa.

The conference is hosted in partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the City of Ekurhuleni.

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Des van Rooyen spoke about spatial fragmentation saying that Cabinet adopted the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) last year to create “liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive, where residents actively participate in urban life”.

“The tourism sector is more likely to benefit from cities’ infrastructure development initiatives. Recent reports stated that metropolitan areas were responsible for almost half of all national business trips. Planning for business tourism must therefore be a critical dimension of tourism planning in these large urban tourism destinations. However, it should be noted that we are mindful that tourism has emerged as a significant driver of local economies, especially in small towns and rural areas,” said Van Rooyen. In the pursuit of radical social and economic transformation through tourism, it is essential that the initiatives and programmes implemented are in accordance with responsible tourism practices.

The Deputy President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Councillor Lindiwe Ntshalintshali, reminded delegates of the importance of preserving natural resources and the environment in their efforts to advance tourism growth.

“Our municipalities receive visitors and play host in areas that harbour our wildlife parks and our beautiful coastal regions. For tourism to be sustainable it must consider the environmental and cultural constraints wherein it operates, and be coherent with the lived experiences of its local people,” said Ntshalintshali.

This LGTC is the second one that is held in the City of Ekurhuleni. According to Ekurhuleni Metro Executive Mayor, Councillor Mzwandile Masina, it is an affirmation of the confidence that the Department and the tourism sector has in the city’s ability to host visitors.

“At the last conference, we committed to developing a plan for tourism. I am pleased to report that the Ekurhuleni Tourism Strategy was developed and approved in 2016, and the city is well on its way to providing improved visitor experiences at all our destinations,” said Masina.

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