

PALEO-TOURISM: PLANS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DINOSAUR INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

Plans are in motion to launch the planning phase of the construction of the renowned Dinosaur Interpretive Centre, officially called the Golden Gate Highlands National Park Interpretive Centre, following the completion of a fundraising process by the Department of Tourism. This exciting Paleo-Tourism will serve primarily as a tourist destination and a visitor attraction centre based on the interpretation of the archaeological, paleontological and geological evidence found, at the Golden Gate Highlands National Park (GGHNP). Reported previously in the July-September 2013 edition of Bojanala – the department’s stakeholder magazine - the paleontological site is located in the jurisdiction of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park (SANParks), which is situated along the popular United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed uKhahlamba Drakensburg World Heritage Site.

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The construction of the project is expected to unlock the economic potential of heritage and cultural tourism products and these offerings in turn will boost the tourism economy of the rural node of Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (Eastern Free State Province). Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality is amongst the 23 district municipalities identified



Existing landscape

for development by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform through the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme. Most importantly the proposed project is informed by the National Rural Tourism Strategy (2012) and the National Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy of the Department of Tourism.

Both National strategies have prioritised the further development and promotion of potential tourism products in rural areas, in line with the objectives of achieving geographical spread and diversification of tourism initiatives

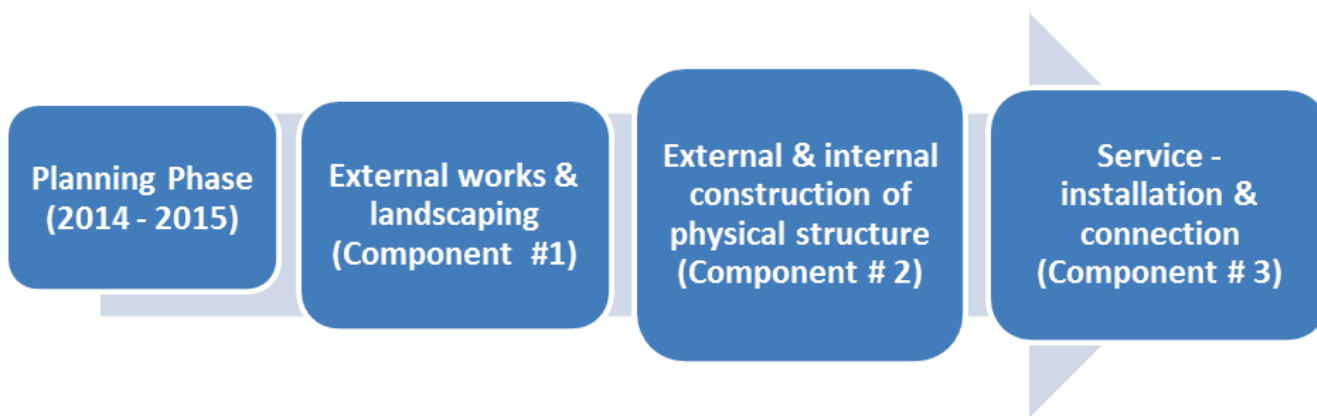
especially in under-represented rural locations, set out in the overarching National Tourism Sector Strategy (2011) and the National Domestic Growth Tourism Strategy (2012) of the Department of Tourism.

The key role players involved in the implementation of the proposed project are the Department of Tourism, Department of Environmental Affairs and the South African National Parks (SANParks). A partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Department of Tourism and the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) outlines key areas of cooperation between both departments and SANParks (an agency of DEA), towards the implementation of the Dinosaur Interpretive Centre at the GGHNP.

According to the projections of the feasibility study of the Dinosaur Interpretive Centre, there will be a number of jobs created during the construction and operational phases of the project. In essence, the project will serve as an economic hub to unlock job creation opportunities and economic beneficiation to the immediate local communities through tourism development in the countryside. **The construction of the project will be implemented in the following phases and activities:**



Proposed structure in the landscape



The feasibility study and the costing of the labour intensity, especially during the construction phases of the Interpretive Centre, illustrates economic beneficiation and employment creation within the local community/ies.

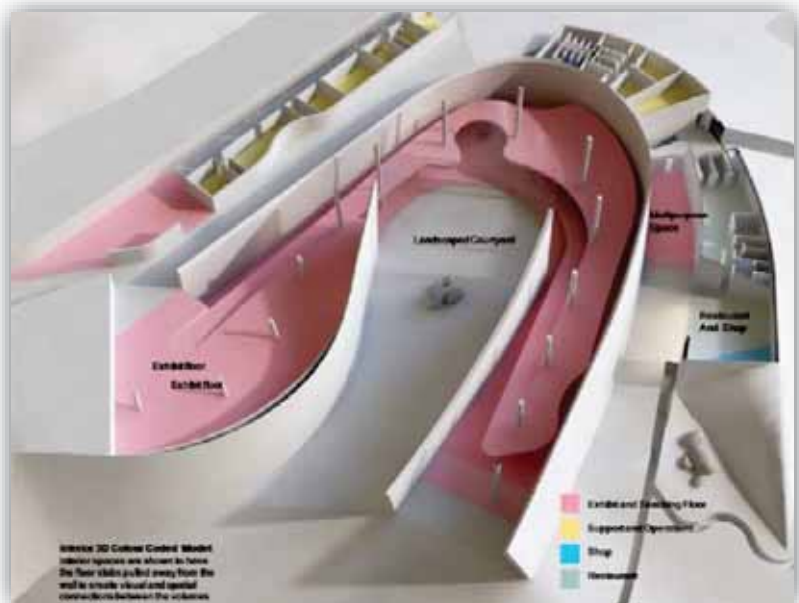
Table 1: Construction phase

NUMBER	COMPONENTS/ PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION	NUMBER OF JOBS
1	Component # 1: External works - site clearing and landscaping	467
2	Component # 2: External and internal construction of physical structure (Interpretive Centre)	334
3	Component # 3: Service - installation and connection	36
	TOTAL	837

The construction of the project within the GGHNP, positions the Interpretive Centre in a visually aesthetic valley and mountainous areas, alongside the small Caledon River. Visitors on the numerous mountain trails in the area will look down onto the spectacular roof of the Dinosaur Interpretive Centre. The Interpretive Centre has been conceptualised as a large cavernous volume concealed under a sweeping planted berm of indigenous Highveld grassland.

The DEA will be responsible for ensuring that all relevant conservation stakeholders are coordinated in respect of buy-in and supporting the construction of the project.

Initial projections are showing that the site will be fully financially viable in the first three years of its functioning as a tourist attraction site. The Dinosaur Interpretive Centre will increase public access on scientific knowledge and broaden the appreciation of science heritage.



Proposed 3D layout of the Interpretive Centre

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