



MEDIA STATEMENT

WORLD-CLASS KGODUMODUMO DINOSAUR INTERPRETATION CENTRE OPENS

22 JUNE 2025

TODAY - South Africa officially opened the doors to its world-class cultural and scientific attraction the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Golden Gate Highlands Park in the Free State Province.

The Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre is a unique interactive facility with a strong potential for tourism growth. The attraction offers visitors an innovative, creative and quality demonstration of scientific knowledge (paleontological, archaeological and geological), with a broader appreciation of cultural heritage through interactive exhibitions.

"It is a joyous occasion for our country as we unveil this new exciting cultural and scientific tourism product."

"This facility is a wonderful addition to our diverse tourism offerings and it will ensure repeat visits, keep visitors longer, and more importantly help visitors spend more money in our captivating destinations," Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille said.

The development of the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre is a collaborative effort between the Department of Tourism (DT) and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). Tourism successfully secured funding of R120 million from the European Union through the National Treasury to construct a centre that will preserve the heritage of this region's significant fossil wealth, and celebrate the indigenous BaSotho cultures that breathe life into the legacy of these pre-historic creatures.

Unveiled under the theme: "*A Nation That Works for All – Unearthing Our Past, Building Our Future*," the new centre offers an immersive experience with interactive exhibitions that promise to awaken curiosity and delight in every visitor - young and old.

"Our country is blessed with many natural resources. The rocks of Golden Gate Highlands are 200 million years old, and their fossils tell a unique story about earth's history.

"The South African fossil record is unique and provides evidence of the earliest single-celled life from 3.5 billion years ago, to the earliest four-legged fish to crawl out on land some 350 million years ago, to the deepest origins of mammals, dinosaurs, turtles, lizards, and of course our ancestors in the dawn of human culture," Minister De Lille added.

Pioneered under the Department's Working for Tourism programme in partnership with South African National Parks Agency (SANParks), the Kgodumodumo Interpretation Centre is set to increase destination competitiveness, transformation, and accelerated tourism and enterprise growth. The facility will be a catalyst for broader tourism development in the Free State's rural economy.

"Investment projects form part of the greater objectives of the South Africa's Tourism Sector Master Plan to stimulate demand, build and diversify the country's tourism offerings."

“The construction of the Kgodumodumo Interpretation centre is a strategic investment to support the long-term economic upliftment of the Free State province.”

“We envision that this tourism facility will boost economic development, create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for surrounding communities, and further attract investment and development,” Minister De Lille added.

The completion of the project includes a successful land claim settlement which will see communities benefitting from the activities in the centre. Furthermore, local communities will benefit from skills development, job opportunities and small business opportunities.

The centre supports SANParks Vision 2040 through the development of a world-class, science- and heritage-based attraction in the Free State Province that serve both conservation and community upliftment goals.

During the construction phase a total of 113 people from the local communities were employed, of which 90% were upskilled with on the job training. The facility boasts amenities that include the Interpretation Centre (paleontological offices and work space); the reception area; lecture halls; the display area-exhibition and display installation; the coffee/curio shop; the activity node – office, activity areas (children); parking – paved parking area; look-out point; and bulk services; upgrade electrical supply – transformer & cable; sewer – connect to existing system; water – connection. The centre will create a thriving market for local SMMEs to offer crafts, food, and cultural experiences.

The launch of the centre takes place as the country commemorates the 49th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising under the theme: *“Skills for the changing world: Empowering youth for meaningful economic participation.”* The event took a moment to honour 15 youth who successfully completed the Department’s Tourist Guides Training programme. The youth received NQF Level 2 accredited qualifications in nature and culture guiding, and will be employed in the area around the Golden Gate Highlands National Park.

Local and international visitors are encouraged to ‘Come find your joy!’ in South Africa, where ancient wonders meet modern marvels at the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre.

ENDS

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