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MEDIA STATEMENT

Department of Tourism stakeholder engagement during Presidential Imbizo, Uthukela District, KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 1 July 2023

The Department of Tourism, held a stakeholder engagement in Ladysmith, uThukela District Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal.

The engagement preceded the District Development Model Presidential Imbizo, which took place in the District.

The meeting was attended by all three spheres of government, industry role-players as well as interested community members and representatives from local tourism establishments, with the aim to hear, first-hand, how the communities feel government can best assist them.

Key among the issues raised at the stakeholder engagement, are:

- Tour Operator Licences
- Homestays
- Roads
- Tourism Safety
- Role of the entertainment industry in tourism
- Job opportunities closer to home

1. TOUR OPERATOR LICENCES

Mr. Mkhulise from Snaye Tours says his vehicles are operating on the basis that he has made applications to renew his tour operator licence. Mr Mkhulise adds that, as a result, he is accumulating traffic fines daily.

The issuing of Tour Operator Licences is the mandate of the Department of Transport. I have had engagements with the Minister of Transport and Operation Vulindlela in the Presidency, regarding this matter. We agreed that

the Minister of Transport should issue an instruction to the Provinces to place a moratorium on the harassment of tour operators. We are currently waiting for the Minister of Transport to issue the moratorium.

2. HOMESTAYS

Ma Mtshali has been doing bead work since 1993, but she is unable to continue doing so because of her ailing eyesight. As such, she would like to venture into other income-generating activities which she would like to be assisted with eg. home stays for tourists visiting the area. She also wants to work with government to create awareness around better waste management initiatives at municipal level, to create a cleaner environment.

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) will further engage her to assist with advice. I am in talks with Airbnb so that they can assist those who want to enter the short-term rental space of running Home Stays.

3. ROADS

The issue of poor road infrastructure was also raised as a concern. Most notably, three main arterials used to access tourism infrastructure, namely: the R600, R74 and R616.

The NDT will engage with the National Department of Transport.

4. TOURISM SAFETY

Mr Diko questioned when the Department of Tourism will rollout the Tourism Safety Strategy, in particular Tourism Monitors.

In this regard, the Department has made available R174 Million in this Financial Year, to train and deploy approximately 1800 Tourism Monitors. I have had discussions with the MECs from the various provinces to request that they make budget available to scale up this programme.

5. ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Khayelihle Goba requested feedback from the Province on whether it will consider continuing funding support for local events and festivals.

The National Department of Tourism must involve local artists in our Tourist Awareness Campaigns.

6. JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Concern has been raised by the youth in the community around the limited opportunities for internships so that they can graduate. But, even more so, when opportunities do arise, these are often too far from home and offered on a voluntary basis, without any form of remuneration. Sadly, given the circumstances from which

most of the students come, they forgo the opportunities because of a lack of finances.

The National Department of Tourism must endeavour to include young people in our tourism infrastructure maintenance programme.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution should not just be a buzz-word.

Khayelihle Mdakana wants to access this space. But he needs government's backing. He, specifically wants support to acquire drone technology and licences, which are expensive. We have heard from the community that there is a number of young people in the emerging farming and photographic arenas, who would benefit from this.

Furthermore, the issue was raised of the inaccessibility of the war memorial sites for, particularly, the Battle of Isandlwana. The engagement heard that this is two-fold: the access roads to enter into the grave sites are in a shoddy state and, secondly, the grave sites are not well maintained.

It is clear that government needs to work hand-in hand with communities across our country, so that targeted measures can be put in place to deliver adequate services.

The Department will address the concerns raised and return to the area to report back within the next three months.

These issues are cross-cutting and speak directly to the purpose of the District Development Model, which aims to eliminate the silos in which government departments have historically worked.

I will immediately bring the matters that fall outside of the Tourism mandate to the attention of my colleagues.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE DISTRICT

The uThukela District Municipality is a region that has abundant natural resources and opportunities.

Tourist destinations include the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Mountains where approximately half a million tourists a year are attracted to this World Heritage Site as well as to the historic battlefields in the region.

Bergville is described as the gateway the Drakensberg.

Some of the most picturesque holiday resorts, like Catkin Peak, Cathedral Peak, Champagne Castle, Oliviershoek, and Spioenkop's historical site are all situated close to the town.

As such, it is one of the major sources of income generation within the tourism industry as the spending in the area contributes significantly to the economy.

Most of these sites are nestled between one of the most scenic mountain landscapes.

The Tugela Falls, the world's second tallest waterfall, is also located in the region.

DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMMES

- **Market Access Support Programme (MASP)**

The MASP offers partial financial support to qualifying small tourism enterprises to participate and exhibit at selected tourism marketing platforms. This is a contribution towards the cost of exhibition space, return airfare and hotel accommodation.

In 2022/23, 31 out of the 120 small enterprises supported under the MASP were located in Kwazulu-Natal.

It is anticipated that these numbers will grow as implementation of the MASP is ramped up in the current Financial Year.

- **The Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP)**

The TGSP offers discounts of either 80% or 90% on grading assessment fees for accommodation and meeting venues that apply for star grading by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA).

The application process is integrated into, and forms part of the online grading application process of the TGCSA.

The TGSP will open for applications, through our entity, South African Tourism.

- **The Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF)**

The TTF offers a combination of debt finance and grant funding for smaller new and expansion tourism development projects with majority black shareholding.

Loans for tourism projects that are approved by the NEF will then be considered for a grant funding portion of 50% of the loan amount up to maximum of R5 million.

There are currently two approved TTF projects located in Kwazulu-Natal, and are located in the uMkhanyakude and Mgungundlovu District Municipalities.

- **The Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP)**

The GTIP offers partial grant funding support on the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities with energy and water efficiency equipment and systems based on the outcome of a resource efficiency audit.

The 1st stage of the application process involves a resource efficiency audit, the cost of which is fully covered under the GTIP programme, followed by a 2nd stage where an applicant can apply for funding support of 50% to 90%, up to R1 million on the cost of installing recommended relevant technologies and equipment.

The programme is administered through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and all applications need to be submitted to the IDC. The current application window for the GTIP opened on 2 May 2023 and closes at the end of June 2023.

Since inception of the GTIP, there have been 13 approved GTIP applications from Kwazulu-Natal. Three of these approvals are located in the uThukela District Municipality.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1. Hospitality Youth Programme (Food and Beverages)

The programme currently has 140 unemployed youth, between the ages of 18 and 35 enrolled in Kwazulu-Natal, from Richards bay, Underberg and Bergville. Project implementation commenced in March this year and runs for a period of 12 months.

2. Wine Service Training (Sommelier) Previous financial year 2022/23

This programme had 100 candidates enrolled in Kwazulu-Natal. 88 learners graduated, 12 dropped out and 54 gained permanent employment.

TOURISM CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME (KZN, UTHUKELA DISTRICT)

The main purpose of the programme is to provide an integrated approach on capacity building for the public sector, private sector and community members within the selected municipalities, to create platforms for stakeholder engagements and information sharing for the growth and development of identified nodal areas.

The programme capacitates selected representatives, SMMEs, municipal officials, Traditional Leaders/ Authorities, cooperatives and unemployed youth/ graduates on the key areas as per the identified needs analysis.

PROGRESS

The programme was implemented in **uThukela District** for the period of three years from 2021 to 2024.

The workshop for SMMEs, hosted in Ladysmith on 6 September 2022, was successfully attended by approximately 60 SMMEs.

The programme fostered relations between the Municipality, Tourism product owners and other relevant stakeholders.

It also promoted awareness of good Tourism and Environmental practices.

TOURISM MONITORS PROGRAMME

The uThukela District had approximately 50 Tourism Monitors in the last phase, which ended in October 2022.

Around 460 Tourism Monitors are scheduled to be deployed to Kwazulu-Natal for the current Financial Year.

TOURISM EQUITY FUND

The R1.2 Billion Fund court case has been settled and a new concept has been development within the existing legislative framework. An announcement for applications will be made by the end of July 2023, following Cabinet's approval.

Ends/

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