



MINISTRY
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MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE, MP

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Mdluli Community Infrastructure Project in Kruger National Park progressing well

As part of my oversight duties, yesterday I visited the Mdluli Community infrastructure Project near Numbi gate in the Kruger National Park to look at the status of this important community tourism project.

One of the key objectives of the Tourism Sector Master Plan is to stimulate demand and increase our tourism offerings and to achieve this, the Department of Tourism has a number of tourism infrastructure projects underway across the country.

Investment in infrastructure by government is central to creating the conditions conducive for investment by the private sector and driving economic growth and job creation. The tourism sector is also a central part of the country's economy and has been performing well over the past year as the sector recovers from the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Between January and October this year, we have already welcomed more than 6.8 million tourists, a significant increase of more than 2.4million arrivals compared to the same period last year. This represents a 54.7% increase on 2022 arrivals for the same period but we have still not reached the 2019 international arrival figures.

Our domestic tourism, the bedrock of this sector, has already surpassed pre-COVID numbers and we are determined to grow arrivals even more that will support further economic growth and job creation.

A key part of our strategy is to invest in establishments so that we constantly diversify our tourism offerings. The Kruger National Park (KNP) is an iconic South African attraction, however, communities surrounding the Park do not feel that they benefit from tourism to the Park.

Following community protests and the closure of the Numbi Gate entrance into the KNP in 2018, the Department of Tourism held stakeholder engagements in the area. One of the outcomes of these Stakeholder Engagement was that the Department would plan for and invest in community owned tourism projects around Numbi Gate.

Following further discussions and agreement with the communities around the Numbi Gate, detailed technical planning was completed and there are currently two community owned projects being funded by the Department in this vicinity; one being the Nkambeni Lodge and the second being the Mdluli

Cultural Centre. The Department is currently providing funding support for the implementation of the Mdluli Cultural Centre. The total investment by government into this project is around R 29.8million.

The project scope entails the development of the following; construction of a 65-seater restaurant with a Boma, construction of change rooms and ablutions, construction of a kiosk, construction of braai facilities, construction of an amusement water park, construction of a guardhouse and boom gate, construction of a security perimeter fence, construction of internal gravel roads, landscaping and water and electricity infrastructure.

The contractor was appointed and the site handed over on 25 April 2023 and the project is currently under construction. The anticipated completion date mid-2024. Currently the project is at 49% project progress and has so far employed 32 people from the surrounding communities.

I visited the project yesterday to inspect progress and engaged the local leaders, local chiefs and the contractor. The project is progressing well and I impressed on all stakeholders the importance of completing this project on time and within budget for the benefit of the community and the tourism sector at large. I also urged all partners to keep working together and maintain good working relations as it is only through partnerships that we will succeed in project implementation.

With all infrastructure projects, it is vital that we have community buy-in and community participation so that communities also reap the benefits of these projects and can work together to see projects completed on time and on budget. We will continue working with all partners and communities as we put greater impetus behind tourism infrastructure projects that will benefit communities, the tourism sector and our visitors.

I will be visiting more infrastructure projects in the coming months and next week, I will be handing over a completed infrastructure maintenance project done by the Department of Tourism at the Wolwekloof Nature Reserve in the Western Cape to CapeNature.

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