



MINISTRY
TOURISM
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THE RESOLUTION OF POSITIONING OF SHANGONI GATE A VICTORY FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

6 MARCH 2024

Good Afternoon Members of the Media Fraternity.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of several important partners who are with us today

The MEC of COGHSTA and MEC of Economic Development and Tourism in the Limpopo Province
Hosi Chauke of the Mtititi Royal House;
Hosi Madonsi of the Madonsi Royal House;
Hosi Muyexe Maluleka of the Muyexe Royal House;
The Executive Mayor of the Vhembe District Municipality, MCC F Kondo;
The Executive Mayor of the Mopani District Municipality, Cllr PJ Shayi;
The Mayor of the Collins Chabane, Cllr SG Maluleke;
Mayor of the Greater Giyani Local Municipalities, Cllr T Zitha
The Chairperson of the Board of Limpopo Tourism;
Senior Government Officials from the Department of Tourism, LEDET, COGHSTA, District and Local Municipalities;

We welcome you all to what is a seminal turning point in the further development of tourism opportunities in the Kruger National Park. Tourism has the potential to contribute to the economic growth of our country, and thereby create jobs and improve the well-being of our people. In our Apartheid past the benefits of tourism did not yield benefits for surrounding communities, leaving them in a sea of poverty with islands of wealth in the tourist hubs. The democratic government seeks to build tourism hubs that benefit communities, enhance the ecology of the area and conserve the fauna and flora in a sustainable way.

This is the main reason for the proposed opening of a new gate on this border of the Kruger National Park, being the biggest of our parks that invites many international and domestic tourists every year.

I applaud all parties for reaching consensus on the positioning of the Shangoni Gate in the northern part of the Kruger National Park (KNP) as this is a major victory for tourism development and growth. From this point forward all of us need to commit ourselves to the creation of jobs and defeating poverty while at the same time sharing the beautiful offerings of our country in a sustainable and green manner.

There has been a long standing dispute on the positioning of the Shangoni Gate amongst communities around and adjacent to the Shangoni Gate on the northern part of Kruger National Park (KNP).

The Department of Tourism committed financial assistance to the South African National Parks (SANParks) in 2016 for the development of the Shangoni Gate. This project was supported as it would catalyse local economic development for both the Vhembe and Mopani District Municipalities by providing job and business opportunities for the local communities through improved access to the KNP especially from the northern side.

At the time that funding had been approved, the Shangoni Gate project was still at a conceptual stage and detailed planning had not yet commenced.

During the consultation process prior to the application for environmental approval, a Shangoni Gate Stakeholder Forum was established and coordinated by the Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism. The Forum was constituted by representatives from the Muyexe Tribal Authority, Mtititi Tribal Authority, Madonsi Tribal Authority, Malamulele Business Forum, Mtititi community, Thulamela Local Municipality and Greater Giyani Local Municipality.

Although at that time, a consensus was reached for the proposed position of the gate, following the 2016 Local Government Election there has been continued discussion over various issues with surrounding communities.

The position of the proposed location is less than one kilometre away from the current management gate used by SANParks staff. During the submission of the Basic Assessment Report, three options were considered and only the proposed position was approved. The current management gate used by SANParks staff was a preferred option from the communities. Amongst the reasons why the current management gate was not viable to be converted into a tourist gate was:

- a) that the road to the gate would have to be constructed through the Altein village which is a residential area;
- b) because this is a residential area there would need to be a lot of meandering/detours in the road which would not allow for smooth traffic flow;
- c) the safety of children would be compromised; and
- d) relocation of some of the residents of the Altein village would have been necessary.

The Shangoni Gate Stakeholder Forum was convened on 27 September 2019 at the Mopani Camp in Kruger National Park. It was in this forum where representative from the Collins Chabane Local Municipality and the Madonsi Tribal Authority (who were represented in the original Shangoni Gate Stakeholder Forum) raised their dissatisfaction with the decision for the proposed position of the gate. The meeting had resolved that these communities should meet and reach agreement on a way forward before the next Stakeholder Forum meeting. The Department also held a series of engagements with officials from the Collins Chabane Local Municipality on the proposed position of the gate.

Although the development is taking place inside the KNP which is within the SANParks jurisdiction, this dispute has threatened construction on site.

Following the intervention of SANParks Board member Chief Luvhuwani Matsila, an agreement was reached to allow construction of the reception area to continue without interruption. Various meetings have been facilitated between Mtititi-Madonsi Shangoni Gate Combatants, Department Tourism and SANParks where an agreement was also reached that Project Advisory Committee will be established to oversee the project during construction and will meet monthly. Although planning has been completed and construction of the reception area is near completion, the commencement of the construction of the entrance gate can only proceed once consensus is reached among communities on the position of the gate.

Last night, 5 March 2024 a stakeholder meeting took place at Mopani Camp in the Northern Part of Kruger National Park and a final resolution was reached in which all parties agreed on the position of the gate. The meeting also agreed that a sub-committee would be set up with representatives from all concerned parties to ensure that the surrounding communities reap the benefits of the opening of this new gate.

The new development will also be a springboard for further development in the area, in related industries. We look forward to inviting you again to the opening of the gate. I thank you

ENDS

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