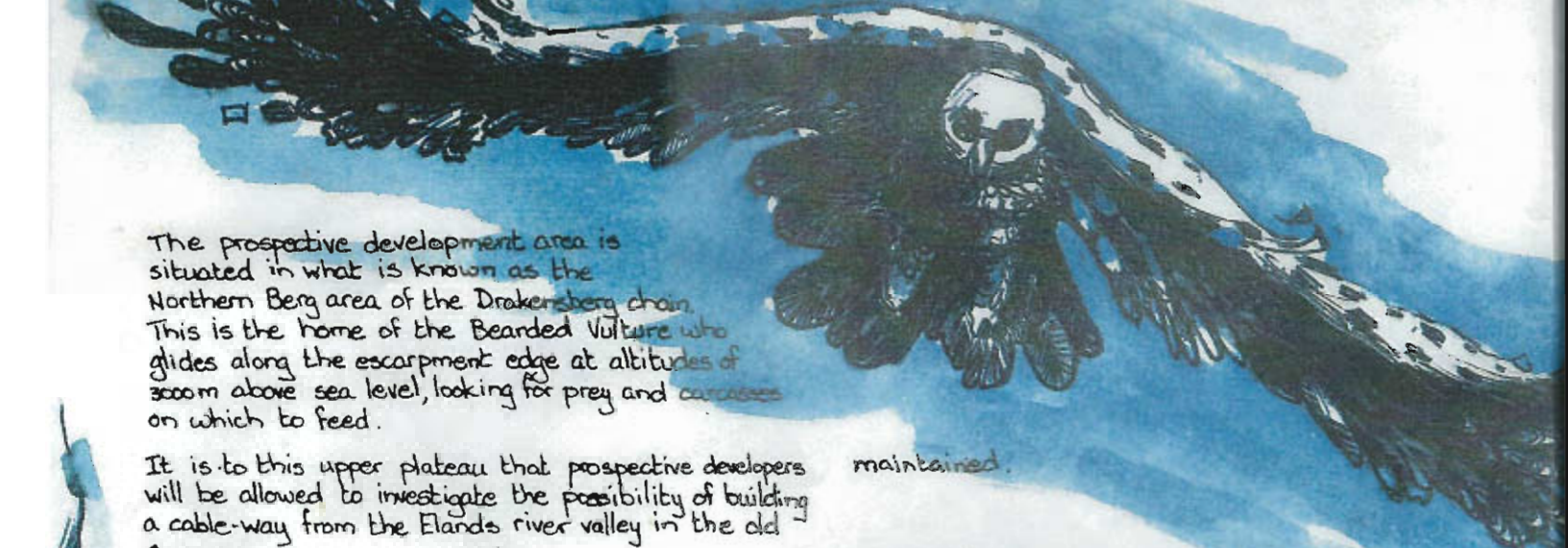


DEVELOPMENT  
OPPORTUNITY -  
BACKGROUND  
AND GUIDELINES  
FOR PROSPECTIVE  
DEVELOPERS OF A  
CABLE-WAY IN THE  
QWAQWA  
DRAKENSBERG



HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT  
NTSHETSOPELE YA MALOTI  
HOOGLAND ONTWIKKELING



The prospective development area is situated in what is known as the Northern Berg area of the Drakensberg chain. This is the home of the Bearded Vulture who glides along the escarpment edge at altitudes of 3000m above sea level, looking for prey and carcasses on which to feed.

It is to this upper plateau that prospective developers will be allowed to investigate the possibility of building a cable-way from the Elands river valley in the old Qwaqwa.

The development area is situated in the new Free State Region, but borders onto the Natal/Kwazulu Region at the top of the mountain at the watershed between the Tugela and Elands river catchments.

There are four access routes to this scenic area with its breathtaking views over Natal/Kwazulu from the top of the world famous Amphitheatre. The first is through Clarens and the Golden Gate and Qwaqwa National Parks to Phuthaditjhaba. There are two access roads to Phuthaditjhaba from the main Johannesburg/Durban route, the first at Kestell and the second just outside Harrismith. The fourth route is from the Northern Berg area past Bergville up the Oliviershoek Pass. This road meets the Harrismith/Phuthaditjhaba road at the Sterkfontein dam. The distance from Johannesburg and Durban are 313 and 342 km respectively.

Notwithstanding the harsh climatic conditions at the top of the mountain, thousands of hikers visit the upper plateau annually to enjoy the view and tranquillity of the mountain. This is made possible by the access road from Phuthaditjhaba to a parking area below the Sentinel Peak guarding over the Amphitheatre and the Tugela and Elands river basins. A chain-ladder helps to make a day trip to the upper plateau possible.

Being recognized as one of the natural wonders of Southern Africa, it is proposed that the Drakensberg be declared a World Heritage site. There are many people and organizations who jealously guard over these mountains to ensure the proper use of the area and that its natural state is

maintained.

The Eco-Tourism division of Highlands Development is directly responsible for control over the possible development area where the upper and lower stations of a cable-way could be situated. The Tugela catchment area where the viewsite over Natal/Kwazulu is situated, is under control of the Natal Parks Board and the Kwazulu Bureau of Natural Resources. The present division of land is shown on the accompanying map. A merger between these bodies will take place in the future, but until then will operate as separate entities.

The Elands river catchment falls under the control of Highlands Development while the Tugela river acts as boundary between the Natal Parks Board to the north and west and Kwazulu to the south and east in its upper catchment.

Although the land in the Elands river valley is managed for conservation purposes by Highlands Development, it is tribal land. The people of the area must be included in any planning through the chief or his representatives.

The decision to allow prospective developers to put forward development proposals was not taken lightly. It was taken by Highlands Development on recommendation by the Steering Committee who will also evaluate development proposals put forward by prospective developers.

After an application by a development group to build a cable-way from the parking area below the Sentinel to the upper plateau, the Eco-Tourism Division of Highlands Development decided to do a study of the present situation on the mountain and the environmental implications of such a development.

The finding of the Steering Committee was that the initial application for the development of a cable-way was not comprehensive enough and that it did not address the environmental implications of such a development. Because of the lack of technical detail it was not possible to carry out a full environmental impact analysis.

The study further indicated that the existing situation on the mountain is far from acceptable because of the large number of people visiting the mountain and the lack of facilities to cater for them.

Because of the problems with the large numbers of people visiting the mountain and the shortcomings of the initial application to develop a cable-way, the Steering Committee decided to call for development proposals from any interested developer or consortium of developers.

Prospective developers must realize that the development area is situated in a very sensitive area and that any development proposal must be environmentally sensitive to stand a chance to be accepted.

Pressure from various conservation groups to not carry on with a cable-way development exists. The study carried out by the Eco-Tourism branch of Highlands Development however shows that the existing situation with hikers is not acceptable and that a cable-way development, if done in the correct way, could counter the problems experienced at present on the mountain.

The study further indicated that the following aspects need special consideration in any proposal for the development of a cable-way

in the Elands river catchment. They are -

- Preservation of water quality

Development of a cable-way will impact on two very important catchment areas, the Tugela and Elands rivers. Water from the Elands river flow directly into the Fika Fatso dam which lie within the development area. Plans should indicate how pollution and siltation of the dam and streams would be prevented.

#### ■ Visual impact

Acceptability of any development proposal would depend on the visual impact it would have. Developers would have to be sensitive to this when deciding on the route and placement of the top and bottom stations.

#### ■ Impact on the present users

Many hikers use the route from the parking area to the chain ladder to reach the upper plateau

above the Tugela falls. Resistance to a cable-way is expressed by many of these people. The potential developers will have to be sensitive to these users in their planning.

#### ■ Impact on the birds of prey

The mountain is the home of the Bearded Vulture as well as other birds of prey. Placement of pylons and the upper station should be such as not to impact on the movement of these birds.

#### ■ Provision of supporting infrastructure

Provision of the supporting infrastructure will need special consideration. The visual impact as well as the impact on natural systems must be dealt with in detail. Special precautionary measures taken must be spelt out.

#### ■ Impact of visitors on the upper plateau

Precautionary measures introduced to eliminate visitor impact on the upper plateau, must be spelt out.



#### ■ Visitor safety measures

The unpredictable climatic conditions at the top of the mountain demands that special safety measures be introduced. Measures taken must be indicated.

#### ■ Provision of potable water to the upper and lower stations.

The provision of potable water to both the upper and lower stations must receive special attention. Water to the upper station will have to be provided from below as an assured supply is not available at the top without dam building. The natural state of the mountain must not be altered. Storage facilities for both fresh water as well as effluent will have to receive attention. Removal

systems for effluent and waste must receive special attention.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation of proposals will be done by the Steering Committee made up of representatives from the public, conservation groups and Government Departments involved with environmental conservation. This committee will submit recommendations to the Highlands Development Board for a final decision.

For proposals from potential developers to be considered, they must contain certain minimum criteria. There are a set of non-negotiable and a set of negotiable criteria. They are -

## NON-NEGOTIABLE CRITERIA

These are criteria which is set and must be included in any proposal to qualify for evaluation by the Steering Committee.

### ■ Compliance with Act's, Ordinances and Policies

All proposals must comply with act's, ordinances and policies in place at the time of submittance of the proposal.

### ■ Viability must be indicated

A viability study must form part of the proposal. This viability must be a detailed economic viability study of the project in totality.

### ■ Community involvement and Approval

The principle of community involvement must be accepted. Proof of community for the proposal must be included.

### ■ Community Benefits

Direct and indirect community benefits to the affected communities must be indicated.

### ■ Land Ownership

Land ownership remains that of Highlands Development on the basis of a right to occupation

This could be converted to title deed ownership.

### ■ Environmental Impact

The principles of the Integrated Environmental Management procedure as compiled by the Department of Environmental Affairs, must be used in the planning procedure.

## NEGOTIABLE CRITERIA

These are criteria that can vary and the extent thereof can be negotiated.

### ■ Benefits to the Affected Communities

Both the direct and indirect benefits must be defined.

### ■ Benefits to Highlands Development

As managers of the land the benefits to Highlands Development must be spelt out. A rental/lease of the affected land must be determined.

### ■ Visitor Control

Control measures of visitors must be cleared with the Eco-Tourism Division of Highlands Development who control the conservation personnel responsible for security in the mountain area.

### ■ Participation with existing roleplayers

There are existing operators involved in the provision of tourist accommodation in the proposed development area. Satisfactory agreements should be reached with these operators where a possible clash of interest could evolve.

### ■ Extent of Investment

The extent of investment in Rand value or otherwise must be spelt out.

### ■ Timing of Establishment

Implimentation date, phases where relevant duration and completion date of the project must be clearly spelt out.

### ■ Operation Period

The prospective developer must spell out the desired terms of concessions and operation time. Renewal arrangements must be indicated.

### ■ Proposed Development

Prospective developers must provide sufficient detail regarding the placement, impacts, rehabilitation measures, design, aesthetics and management procedures for evaluation of their proposal to be carried out. The successful developer will be the one with an imaginative proposal which will convince the conservation bodies that the proposal is environmentally friendly and of benefit to the region as a whole.

