

From: Meridy Pfothenauer

Sent: 11 December 2013 11:38 PM

To: DAE: Dumusani Gwede (dumusani.gwede@kzndae.gov.za)

Subject: Proposed Busingatha Cableway. 15.11.2013: Letter to DAE, Compliance, Monitoring & Enforcement

Dear Mr. Gwede,

Thank you for following up on this matter with Sheila Berry who forwarded her email below to me. It was not clear if you had received the attachments to the email forwarded by Sisonke Municipality. I am therefore attaching the following for your records:

- African Conservation Trust (ACT) Preliminary Comments on the proposed Busingatha Cableway
- The Wilderness Action Group (WAG) – also preliminary comments.

For your records I am also attaching an objection from WAG and another, from myself, to the above meeting on 5 December 2013. I gather that neither my objection nor the ACT letter were noted at the meeting as I requested, although it seems the WAG objection was noted.

As you may know I have worked in the Drakensberg for 33 years, with a range of NGOs, including the Farmer Support Group, the Wilderness Action Group and the African Conservation Trust as well as various Heritage institutions. A good deal of this time has been devoted to working with the mountain communities between Royal Natal National Park and Cathedral Peak. During 2010/2011 the Stewardship Programme conducted a year's consultation with a wide range of community sectors from both the AmaZizi and AmaNgwane Traditional Authority areas. Consensus was obtained on the creation of a community Nature Reserve incorporating a wilderness area between Royal Natal and Cathedral Peak. The boundaries of this area had been GPS'd by community wilderness groups. Biodiversity of the Busingatha Valley was rated 18/20 by an ecologist – the highest rating for any Stewardship area to date.

As you are no doubt aware a Protected Area, linking the two sections of the existing Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site (MDP WHS), is highly desirable with regard to securing the integrity of the World Heritage Site as well as providing much needed job opportunities for the nine mountain communities comprising the current gap in the MDP WHS.

I have attended a number of meetings related to the cableway, including Steering Committee meetings, and am extremely concerned about the way in which completely unrealistic and premature expectations of municipalities and communities are being raised about the proposed Busingatha cableway. Further, it seems the project was never formally introduced to the late Inkosi Miya who recently died. An increasing number of organisations and NGOs are also expressing serious concerns about the manner in which the process of the proposed cableway has taken place to date.

I am drawing these issues to your attention in the hope that, should the proposal progress to the EIA stage, the flawed process that the project has taken to date will be thoroughly investigated. Thank you for your assurance that the full EIA process will be followed, especially given the inescapable serious and irreversible impacts the cableway would have on the MDP WHS – the upper cableway station is only 78m from the World Heritage Site boundary. You will note, in both of the attached preliminary comments, that reference is made to a number of detailed studies. The latter include an in-depth investigation of cumulative and synergistic impacts, as part of the EIA process. The Precautionary Principle, which applies in terms of EIA legislation, is of particular importance.

Kind regards,

Meridy Pfothenauer
KwaZulu-Natal