



MEDIA STATEMENT

CENTRAL RESEVATION, A POSIBILITY FOR MANGAUNG

Bloemfontein: Following the successful Confederation Cup in 2009, the FIFA World Cup in 2010, the annual Macufe and the pulling power of both, the Cheetahs and Bloemfontein Celtics, Mangaung Metropole might be ready for central reservation facility to assist revellers, travellers and accommodation establishment in Mangaung.

Speaking to accommodation owners at the breakfast meeting held recently in Bloemfontein, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mxolisi Dukwana expressed the Free State government's plan to make Free State a destination of choice. Addressing about 100 accommodation establishment owners, from Bloemfontein, which is part of Mangaung, the MEC stressed the importance of excellent service.

Dukwana said the People of the Free State have to make a choice to compete with other provinces and loose or carve a niche for themselves in the vast tourism landscape in South Africa and make a mark. He said "if people know that in Free State, they are going to feel welcomed, comfortable and home away from home, they will stop treating it like a go through province or a 5 minutes city for filling of petrol and refreshing.

The Free State is endowed with the abundance of natural beauty and has a special appeal to City dwellers who wish to escape to the country side. Tourists and travellers are invited to tour the Free State and make it a Go To destination. The Free State is also known for cultural tourism and scenic beauty in Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality, (Clarence Area); Sports and business tourism in Motheo (Bloemfontein); Weekend leisure and tourism in Fezile Dabi (Parys and Sasolburg area) and Sports and weekend tourism in Lejweleputswa District (Welkom).

Dukwana said Free State is a hidden treasure of South African Tourism awaiting to be discovered. On the cost costs to tourists, the Free State is still regarded as the least expensive tourism destination region in the country. The centrality of the province is the most important competitive advantage in real terms and still remains to be exploited. Hospitality industry should aim for service excellence and provide travellers with memorable experience.

Over the years the Free State province has demonstrated its ability to host a significant number of events of various proportions. This FEVER of events is a new brand that recognizes our passion as the Free State community in all events and activities that are held here. Central reservation facility was discussed as a possibility to make life easier

COMMUNICATION & ICT

24 Bojanala Building
Markgraaf Street
Bloemfontein
9300

Private Bag X 20801
Bloemfontein
9300

Tel +27 (0)51 400 9542
Fax +27 (0)51 400 9541
e-mail: tauk@dteefs.gov.za

for tourists and travellers not to struggle for information with regard to available accommodation in Bloemfontein. This will also assist establishment owners in terms of their establishments' visibility and availability to the people. Partnership between government and accommodation owners was also mentioned by the MEC as one crucial element that needs to be strengthened. He said that there is financial aid offered by government and few of the Free Staters are beneficiaries and that must come to an end.

All of these are necessary and relevant as Bloemfontein is preparing itself to host Centenary Celebration of the ANC in 2012; where about 100 000 visitors are expected to descend Bloemfontein. This is not a surprise as Free State has a proud political history and is a birth place of Africa's oldest liberation movement, the ANC. In his budget vote in March 2011, MEC said that, the province has been presented with yet another history making tourism opportunity and it will never get bigger than that. He said all that is left now is to make sure that we put the Free State on the make again.

In total Free State has plus/minus 5000 accommodation establishments with less than 200 of those not graded. This sector of tourism is counted amongst economic drive sectors and much still need to be done to make sure that its full potential is unleashed. Mr Rakolojane from Tourism Grading Council of South Africa explained the new grading system and its benefit to the establishments. He said as this industry of tourism is still growing, many establishment owners take advantage of its systems and practice under false pretence and action has been taken against some of those. This is also a warning to those who are still doing that to please stop and ask for assistance to be able to be legitimate. President of FEDHASA (Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa) said they are very glad to hear that action will be taken against owners who practice under false pretence with regard to grading. He said this is music to their ears as such unscrupulous establishment owners give them all bad name.

In closure, he encouraged establishment owners to work together, share ideas and provide mentoring to those upcoming ones to make sure that their businesses are sustainable.

Issued by Communication unit

Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

For more information please contact: Ms Mocholom or Ms Nyamate on (051) 4009547/9548

Email: nyamatef@dteea.fs.gov.za, mocholom@dteea.fs.gov.za