



**destea**

department of  
economic, small business development,  
tourism and environmental affairs  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **NAVAL HILL PLANETARIUM GOES GLOBAL**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Bloemfontein:** Since the official opening on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013, the Naval Hill Digital Planetarium has been visited by 12532 people of which 385 were teachers, 2872 were learners and 9197 were members of the public. The Naval Hill Planetarium provides shows and operates every day of the week and presents two shows per sitting. This project, which is inside a protected area, the only one in the centre of the city is envisaged to ensure that the Free State becomes the hub of eco and astro tourism in South Africa.

The planetarium, situated at the old Lamont-Hussey Observatory Building built in 1928 on Naval Hill, has been established by the University of the Free State (UFS) with the support of founding partners – the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) and the Mangaung Metro Municipality (MMM). Other visitors to the planetarium are made up of engineering, ICT, groups, UFS students, church members and science fanatics just to mention a few.

Next step after opening and establishing the planetarium to learners, teachers, tourists, general public, science fanatics and engineering was the department to illustrate and test the technical capabilities of the system. Therefore the first full dome digital presentation day in South Africa was presented at the planetarium today, Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015. This was a joint initiative between DESTEA and the UFS to raise awareness of the unique facility situated in Bloemfontein to benefit the Province as a whole.

This facility is ideally suited to entertain launches, school tours, educational and social events, private functions, general talks, musical shows, etc. The dozen high quality presentations were from producers around the world and as varied as travelling in the universe to displaying 3D models of body cells images obtained in the lab.

Experts from many places throughout the world like the Sky-Skan from America, University of Cape Town and University of Stellenbosch tested the full capability of the dome. Some of the tests that were performed today were among others a full dome show to test the dome to space and back, to use a real-time flight through the known universe using real datasets in DigitalSky, to test the Free State geographic system through high definition, to mention but a few.

The planetarium has with no doubt increased our international arrivals. It has added to the already existing tourism attractions of Heritage Site and Game Reserve found at Naval Hill. The planetarium promotes the Astro tourism in the province. This project has surely put Bloemfontein and the province as a whole on the international map and the city of roses is recognised as the learning hub of the Free State.

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