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GLTP DEVELOPMENTS IN THE KNP GAIN MOMENTUM

The Acting Director of the Kruger National Park Mr Josias Chabani took 18 journalists through the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park tourism infrastructure development projects worth R40-million today. These projects, which form part of the implementation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, are rapidly gaining momentum in the Kruger National Park (KNP).

In line with the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) initiative, most of these developments are designed to facilitate movement of tourists between the KNP and the Limpopo National Park (LNP) in Mozambique.

Possibly the most important development is the new R6-million Giryondo Border Post situated 45 kilometres North-East of Letaba on the Eastern boundary of the KNP. On completion, the border post will offer easy access to the LNP in Mozambique as it is roughly 100 kilometres from Phalaborwa.

Construction of the border post building, which has been designed to fit in with the environment, started in mid-July 2003 and is due for completion at the end of May 2004. The thatch roof building itself will have eight offices for KNP reception staff and immigration officials, a walk-in safe and toilets on both the arrivals and departures side of the building. Further to this, there will be two vehicle inspection points, ample parking for vehicles, access control, a guardhouse and two flats for security staff.

An important component of this project is staff accommodation for officials from immigration and SANParks. Seven flats and three houses are presently being constructed at the Letaba Staff Village for this purpose.

On the other side of the border, the Mozambican authorities will start the construction of the border post building early next year.

The next project is the upgrade and construction of what used to be a management road into a tourist road to provide access to Giryondo Border Post. At a cost of R3,1-million, this gravel road is approximately 24 kilometres long and tourists will be able to access this road by turning Eastwards (facing North) 20 kilometres from Letaba at the Maloponyana Windmill

off the H1-6 main road between Letaba and Mopani camps. This road is at an advanced stage of construction and should be completed by the end of December 2003.

The Giryondo Access Road (it has not been officially named yet) will also be the access road to the new R1,5-million Makhadzi Tourism and Interpretive Centre, which will probably be known as the Makhadzi Day Visitor's Site when it is opened on November 1, 2003.

This site, which has been designed to accommodate more than 100 tourists, has been built on the footprint of an old military base. Again the KNP's "new look" has been incorporated into the design of this facility as the buildings have been designed to blend in with the environment and thus they are built out of wood with thatch roofs. An added challenge is the area is part of the flood plain of the Makhadzi Spruit so most of the structures have been built on stilts.

The facility itself consists of an interpretive centre, parking for 35 vehicles, picnic sites, 20 braai sites (including a group braai area), a kiosk, two public ablutions (including access for wheelchairs), two camp kitchens and staff accommodation. The interpretive centre will display extensive information on the whole GLTP project and artefacts from Steinaecker's Horse Regiment, the unit that conducted operations in the area during the Anglo Boer War.

Other GLTP projects include the upgrading of the present access road to the Pafuri Border Post to a tar road, the planning of a crossing point over the Limpopo River to Zimbabwe which is currently underway, the upgrading of the existing road network North of Shingwedzi to facilitate tourist travel between the KNP and the

LNP, the development of an overnight facility in the Far North Region near Pafuri, the dropping of 20 kilometres of the fence between the KNP and the LNP, the development of research infrastructure in the Northern region of the KNP and the relocation of the Pafuri and Punda Maria entrance gates to the boundary fence of the KNP.

“As the Kruger National Park is the South African component of this Transfrontier Conservation Area, we have committed ourselves to the success of the entire GLTP initiative, which is why these projects are so important to us,” said KNP Acting Director Mr Josias Chabani.

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Muleso Kharika from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and Josias Chabani the acting director of the Kruger National Park recently took journalists on a trip to inspect GLTP developments in Kruger.

Issued by:

Raymond Travers, Media Relations Practitioner, Kruger National Park. Contact: Tel: 013 735 4116, cell: 082 908 2677 or email: raymond@parks-sa.co.za

Enquiries:

William Mabasa, Public Relations and Communications Manager, Kruger National Park. Contact: Tel: 013 735 4363, cell: 082 807 3919 or email: william@parks-sa.co.za