



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: 16/5/7

Enq: Thumeka Ntloko

Tel: 012 310 3540 Fax: 012 320 1243 Email: ntloko@environment.gov.za
www.environment.gov.za

Mr K Rao
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre
7, palace de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
FRANCE

Dear Mr Rao

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR MAPUNGUBWE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE WORLD HERITAGE SITE (MCLWHS)

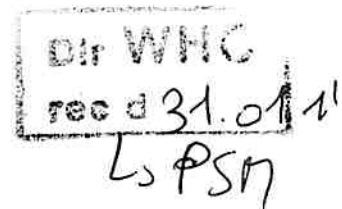
As you may recall, Decision 37 COM 7B.43 of the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) noted the progress made in establishing a buffer zone for the MCLWHS that will cover land to the east of the boundary, progress with the establishment of the Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) and also urged the State Party to submit a minor boundary modification for a buffer zone that clarifies the policies for protecting the property with respect to mining in the buffer zone and in relation to "off-set benefits.

In an attempt to implement the above mentioned decision, the State Party embarked on a process to review the buffer zone for MCLWHS so that the delineated area is in sync with the purpose identified for the area as a World Heritage Site (WHS). The sole mandate of reviewing the buffer zone was to ensure that:

- The eastward extension of the buffer zone improves the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
- The modification and confirmation of the buffer zone enables MCLWHS to comply with the requirements of Unesco;
- The modification of the buffer zone significantly improves cooperation between government departments with interest in the area; and
- The modification of the buffer zone also aligns the world heritage site buffer and the national park buffer into one and thus making it easier to manage.

The State Party ensured that the revision of the buffer zone be underpinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring the protection of Mapungubwe National Parks' priority natural and cultural heritage areas, catchment protection areas and viewshed protection areas;
- Ensuring the protection of important elements of the cultural landscape that makes up the world heritage site's Outstanding Universal Value;



- The size of the buffer zone should be determined by its ability to effectively protect the vital biodiversity and cultural heritage attributes of the national park and world heritage site; and
- The idea is to have one buffer zone for the national park and for the world heritage site, however variation will be allowed where the requirements of the two cannot be reconciled. A draft discussion document as well as a proposed buffer (see annexure 1, blue line) was developed and stakeholder consultation was conducted accordingly.

In 2003, when MCLWHS was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape, it was recorded that the core site of the nominated area covers nearly 30 000 ha and is supported by a buffer zone of around 100 000 ha. Although the latter was not marked on the maps provided at the time and the extent was not substantiated by any cadastral maps based on the GIS data.

The State Party commissioned an independent study to assist in providing the department with an audit of land use activities in and around MCLWHS and recommendations which would assist with the revision of the buffer zone for MCLWHS. The studies undertaken focused on the development of an audit of land use activities around the MCLWHS and revealed that contrary to the stated size of 100 000 ha, the 2009 proclaimed buffer is actually 237 100ha. Subsequently, the independent study proposed a minimal buffer zone (see annexure 1, black line) of 71 650ha for MCLWHS to serve as cushion to the core of the property.

A separate exercise was also carried out led by the South African National Parks (SANParks) who are the Management Authority for the MCLWHS. This exercise recommended a different and larger buffer zone as compared to the one recommended by the independent study.

In order to ensure that all interested and affected parties are consulted, meetings were held with landowners, mining companies, NGO's and other interested and affected parties. Newspaper adverts were also published. Following the consultations the State Party decided to approve a SANParks proposed buffer zone due to the reasons stated below:

- The size of the SANParks proposed buffer zone (104 800 hectares) is almost equivalent to the size of the buffer zone stated at inscription (100 000 hectares) and is considered big enough to protect the core as it is more than three times bigger than the core.
- The SANParks proposed buffer zone adequately covers visual sensitivity and sites of archeological and cultural significance and thus a reasonable cushion for the OUV.
- The SANParks proposed buffer zone appears to be more economically viable compared to the proclaimed 2009 buffer.
- The boundary of the SANParks proposed buffer zone is clearly demarcated with cadastral maps that are linked to the GIS data; and
- The SANParks proposed buffer zone will go a long way in maintaining a reasonable balance between the conservation, biodiversity and heritage priorities on the one hand and the national development priorities on the other.
- Although the independent study proposed a minimal buffer zone they still supported the SANParks proposed buffer zone as it best represents the best balance between conservation and development priorities.

In order to ensure adequate protection of the eastern side of the WHS, the State Party reached an agreement with the land owner (Mr. Piet Estherhuizen, the land owner of Portion 0 (RE) of Bismarck 116 MS) regarding inclusion of his properties in the buffer zone.

In line with decision 37 COM 7B.43 the State Party would also like to record that in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, No 57 of 2003 (NEMPAA), mining is prohibited in a protected area. The property and its buffer zone are accorded the status of a protected area through the NEMPAA. In addition, the State Party has commissioned development of an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) to advise on specific land uses that may best be practiced in the area. These tools will ultimately advise on regulatory tools required.

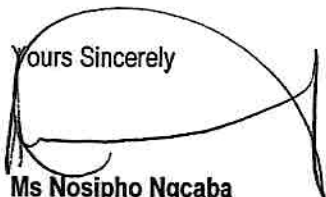
The Mining and Biodiversity guidelines endorsed by both the Ministers of Environmental Affairs and Mineral Resources continue to guide the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the mining sector. The National Biodiversity Offset Policy has been initiated and will be a valuable tool to advise all offsets agreements in the country.

Also note that the State Party has finalized the Biodiversity Offset negotiation with Vele Colliery and that the agreement will be signed shortly. A copy of the signed agreement will be sent to you as soon as the parties have signed.

In view of the above, the State Party hereby submits a minor boundary modification for a buffer zone of 104 800 ha for MCLWHS. Please note that in terms of hectares, the proposed buffer zone is larger than that stated in the nomination dossier.

In case you need more information or clarity on the above mentioned, please do not hesitate to contact, Director: World Heritage Management, Ms Thumeka Ntloko on Tel: 012 310 3540 or email tnntloko@environment.gov.za

Yours Sincerely



Ms Nosipho Ngcaba

Director General

Department of Environmental Affairs

Letter signed by: Mr Fundisile Mketeni

Designation: Deputy Director-General: Biodiversity and Conservation

Date: 30 January 2014

MINOR MODIFICATION TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE MAPUNGUBWE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

1. Area of the property (in hectares)

- a. The proclaimed World Heritage property core is 28 168.66 ha with a buffer zone of 100 000 ha¹.
- b. The proposed buffer zone is 104 800 ha

2. Description of the modification

The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape was listed in 2003 as a world heritage site. The core of the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site originally had twenty two farms, measuring approximately 28 800 hectares in extent and some of these farms have to-date been subdivided. According to the nomination dossier, the size of the buffer zone is recorded as 100 000 ha although this was not marked on the maps supplied at the time. The properties (Venetia-Limpopo Nature Reserve, Vhembe Nature Reserve and Limpopo Valley Game Reserve) were identified as properties making up the buffer zone. A 2009 proclamation of the buffer zone was also recorded as 100 000 hectares.

A recent study undertaken by the State Party has revealed that the 2009 proclaimed buffer zone is more than double the initially stated size of 100 000ha. The proclaimed buffer zone covers approximately 237 100 hectares in net extent (excluding the core). It covers the land on the western, southern and south eastern part of the core. It includes quite a number of different landowners and land tenure systems.

The modification of the buffer zone involves the reduction from 237 100 hectares to 104 800 hectares. The modification reduces part of the buffer zone in the southern and south eastern side and adds areas to the east which were initially excluded (7 kilometers between the property and the Vele colliery).

3. Justification for the modification

When Mapungubwe was inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 2003, it was recorded that the core site of the nominated area covers nearly 30,000ha and is supported by a buffer zone of around 100,000ha. At the time of the proclamation of the buffer zone in 2009, the area to the east of the WHS was not included as there was no agreement with the landowners at that stage. The area therefore remained vulnerable to all sorts of developments and this led to the granting of the Vele mining license.

At the time of the proclamation of the WHS and buffer zone the state party included in the buffer zone entire properties whose owners desired to be included in the WHS buffer. This resulted in a buffer that did

¹ 100 000 ha as proclaimed in 2009, but the recent studies reveal that the buffer zone is actually 237 100 ha

not serve any particular purpose in the context of the Convention. Pieces of land were added as and when they were available. In order to address this anomaly, the State Party initiated a process to review the buffer zone for Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site so that the buffer zone is delineated to serve the purpose of protecting the outstanding universal value.

The State Party acknowledges that the existing buffer zone of the property extends beyond areas that are necessary for the effective protection of the property's OUV. This point was also acknowledged by ICOMOS in its presentation of the property's State of Conservation report at the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee. The existing buffer zone is not based on any conservation sensitivities or attributes related considerations. The size of the proposed buffer zone was determined by its ability to effectively protect the vital cultural heritage attributes relating to the property's OUV as well as visual sensitivities and biodiversity attributes of the national park and world heritage site.

The State Party therefore considers the 2009 proclaimed buffer zone too large and practically too difficult to manage effectively. The modification of the buffer zone will also ensure the alignment of the world heritage buffer and the national park buffer into one and thus make it easier to manage.

It will also be easier for the State Party to ban incompatible uses in a reduced buffer zone than the current larger buffer zone. The proposed buffer zone remains more than three times the size of the property.

4. Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value

The assessment of the area has enabled the State Party to map out a more effective buffer zone informed by distribution of archaeological sites, view shed protection and catchment protection areas. The eastward extension of the buffer zone will improve the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value as it will cushion the property from any developments happening on the eastern side.

The proposed buffer zone adequately covers all aspects of the OUV and archaeological sites related to the Mapungubwe period.

5. Implications for legal protection

Management of the buffer zone will be done in terms of applicable national legislation. There are no legal implications since the property will still be protected under the South African World Heritage Convention Act, National Environmental Management Act and the National Heritage Resources Act 45 of 1999. Furthermore, in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, the Minister or MEC may declare an area as a protected environment to; amongst others, regulate the area as a buffer zone for the protection of a World Heritage Site (WHS). The property in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No 57 of 2003) enjoys double protection as it is considered a protected area by virtue of being a national park as well as having been proclaimed as a world heritage site.

6. Implications for the management arrangements

The justification for the modification of the buffer zone is not only with regards to the size which is deemed to be cushion enough for the core but rather to the issue of management since the South African National Parks (SANParks) is currently the management authority. The proposed buffer zone is considered to be feasible in terms of management capacity, financial ability and will be in line with legislation and policies

and further be in line with UNESCO general guidelines on establishment of buffer zones. The management of the property will improve as the area will be easy to manage for SANParks (Management Authority..

7. Maps

See Attached







**MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR MAPUNGUBWE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
ORIGINAL AND PROPOSED REVISION**

Zimbabwe

Botswana

South Africa: Limpopo Province

Legend

-  Parent Farm
-  Parent Farm subdivisions (Portions)
-  Boundary of the World Heritage property
-  Proposed Buffer zone for the World Heritage property
-  Buffer zone for the World Heritage property
-  International boundary



29°0'0"E

29°20'0"E

29°40'0"E

MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR MAPUNGUBWE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
PROPOSED REVISION

Zimbabwe

Botswana

South Africa: Limpopo Province

Legend

- Parent Farm
- Parent Farm subdivisions (Portions)
- Boundary of the World Heritage property
- Proposed Buffer zone for the World Heritage property
- International boundary



0 5 10 20 30 40 Kilometres

29°0'0"E

29°20'0"E

29°40'0"E