

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT FOR THE MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK, SAPI AND CHEWORE SAFARI AREAS WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY (with reference to tourism development and mining- related activities)

1. Background

On 23 July 2012 the World Heritage Centre informed the State Party of Zimbabwe by communication ref: CLT/WHC/74/ZIM/12/01/LE of its concern over information it received regarding tourism development and mining related activities taking place in the Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas. Prior to receiving the WHC letter, between May and June 2012, the Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO (ZimNatCom) had received similar reports and concerns from local NGO stakeholders represented by Zambezi Society and the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Committee. In response to these concerns the Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO took action by engaging all concerned governmental and non- governmental stakeholders to establish the facts on these developments in order to assess their impact on the outstanding universal values of the heritage site.

The concerns of the NGO stakeholders were as follows:

- a) The poor quality of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) done for the Mana Pools Safari Camp situated at Vine Camp in Mana Pools National Park. The EIA was done by Vibes Consultancy Services for the developer, ECIS Investments P/L, and was approved by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA). The Zambezi Society was concerned about the potential damage to the biologically sensitive alluvial woodland ecosystem along the Zambezi shoreline.
- b) Lack of wide stakeholder consultations during the public consultations for the EIA;
- c) Lack of implementation of the Draft Mana Pools National Park Management Plan by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority;
- d) Proposed mining for Heavy Mineral Sands in the Rukomechi and Chewore Rivers

By communication ref: C/525/5 dated 29 October 2012 Zimbabwe submitted an interim report on its findings and action taken to address the issues of concern.

This report now seeks to provide an update on progress made to date to ensure compliance of developments with the property's World Heritage status.

2. Updated Report on development of Mana Pools Safari Lodge and prospecting for Heavy Mineral sands in the Rukomechi and Chewore Rivers

Between May 2012 and November 2013 the Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO convened six meetings with stakeholders and managing authorities for the Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas world heritage property. ZimNatCom also undertook two monitoring visits to the concerned development areas.

The objectives of the meetings and visits were:

- to establish the facts regarding the issues raised by the WHC and local NGO stakeholders,
- to plan the way forward with the involvement of all concerned parties,
- to assess the progress on compliance of the developments with the world heritage status of the property.

Issue 1

- The poor quality of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) done for the Mana Pools Safari Camp situated at Vine Camp in Mana Pools National Park

Both Governmental and NGO stakeholders agreed that the EIA for Mana Pools Safari Lodge had not been done properly. The stakeholders recommended that the EIA be revised to take into consideration their concerns about possible negative impacts on the environment.

Action taken

The Environmental Management Agency withdrew approval of the initial EIA done for the project and requested a revised document in line with the stakeholders recommendations. This was done in accordance with the Environmental Management Act which permits retrospective revision of an EIA if there are factors necessitating the revision when development has already commenced.

ECIS Investments P/L complied with this requirement and submitted a revised EIA document which was then approved by EMA in March 2013. Stakeholders noted that the revised document presents issues more systematically and proposes mitigation measures against negative impacts which are environmentally sensitive.

Issue 2

- Lack of wide stakeholder consultations during the public consultations for the EIA

The Mana Pools Safari Lodge developer addressed this issue by consulting a wider range of stakeholders ranging from government departments, NGOs including Zambezi Society and its members and local authorities operating in and around the property.

National Museums and Monuments was consulted and invited to conduct the mandatory Archaeological Impact Assessment. The assessment showed that there

were no cultural artefacts disturbed on the construction site and that the project has no impact on cultural resources in the Park.

Issue 3

- Lack of implementation of the Draft Mana Pools National Park Management Plan by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority

The Parks and Wildlife Management Authority is implementing the draft Management Plan for Mana Pools National Park. However there is need for the Authority to produce and implement the final Management Plan.

Action taken

The National Commission has since advised Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to produce a comprehensive Integrated Management Plan for the world heritage property which encompasses Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas.

Issue 4

- Mining related activities in the Rukomechi and Chewore Rivers

Prospecting for Heavy Mineral Sands was undertaken on a 20km stretch along the Rukomechi riverbed by Hubbard Investments on behalf of Geo Associates (Pvt.) Ltd in 2011. This activity was carried out without an environmental impact assessment having been done. Stakeholders recommended that no mining activity should be allowed in the world heritage property.

Action taken

Prospecting activities were stopped in 2011. Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has since withdrawn the prospecting Company's permit.

Conclusion

The concerns raised by the WHC regarding tourism development and mining related activities have been addressed by the State Party through the involvement of all the stakeholders. The negative ecological impacts which were anticipated from the construction of a semi-permanent lodge at Vine Camp were addressed by adopting appropriate mitigation measures proposed in the revised EIA document (see copy attached).

Construction of the Mana Pools Safari Lodge is now nearing completion. As a result of adopting the mitigation measures the vegetation has been preserved to ensure minimal alteration of the scenery. The semi-permanent structures have blended very well with the environment as well as with the tree line in the vicinity.

Concerns regarding mining related activities have been addressed by implementing the "no mining in the world heritage property" policy. This has been demonstrated by the withdrawal of the prospecting permit by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority.

Following the actions taken to address the concerns of the WHC the State Party of Zimbabwe is convinced that the outstanding universal values of the property are not under threat and that the construction of Mana Pools Safari lodge has complied with the requirements of the World Heritage Centre.