

**STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT FOR THE  
VREDEFORT DOME WORLD HERITAGE SITE**



**SOUTH AFRICA**

**BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**February 2015**

## **PART I – IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY**

**Name of property:** Vredefort Dome (N1162)

**State Party and Province(s):** South Africa, Free State and North West

## **PART II – STATE OF CONSERVATION**

### **A. Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision, paragraph by paragraph**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report is the State Party of South Africa's response to Decision 37 COM 7.B.6 of the World Heritage Committee that, amongst others, requested the State Party:

- to complete the proclamation of the property as soon as possible and to notify the World Heritage Centre when this has been completed,
- to finalise work associated with previous requests in particular those relating to the land use planning controls, the establishment of the Management Authority, the preparation of Regulations and guide material for the effective on-ground management by the authority,
- to implement the recommendations of the 2010 monitoring mission, particularly in relation to the presentation of the World Heritage property to visitors, the alignment of the boundaries of the buffer zone with existing farm cadastres, visitor access and associated site protection mechanisms, and
- to also submit by **1 February 2015**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above mentioned requests.

#### **2. COMPLETION OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PROPERTY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

In the 2013 State of Conservation report, the State Party reported that a Memorandum of Agreement has been signed between the private Landowners and the then Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs (Now Minister of Environmental Affairs) providing for among other things the proclamation of the property as a world heritage site in terms of national legislation.

It was further reported then that the Minister was involved in a consultation process with all relevant stakeholders including interested and affected landowners towards proclaiming Vredefort Dome as a world heritage site in terms of national legislation. The report also mentioned that all affected land owners and stakeholders have given the Minister a go ahead to proclaim the property as a world heritage site in terms of national legislation.

The State Party regrets to inform the Committee that the proclamation (gazette notice) has still not been published due to a complication that arose with the Landowners

demanding that the proclamation happens at the same time as the establishment of the management authority. The State Party wishes to bring to the attention of the committee the fact that the Agreement entered into between the Minister and the Landowners, provides for the Management Authority to be an independent Public Entity. The process of establishing a public entity in South Africa involves lengthy consultations and has to be approved by National Treasury. The Department of Environmental Affairs is engaged in consultations towards establishment of the public entity.

The proclamations will therefore not happen until the public entity is established as demanded by the Landowners. The State Party will continue to work hard towards finalizing the process of establishing an entity and the proclamation.

### **3. WORK ASSOCIATED WITH PREVIOUS REQUESTS:**

#### **3.1. LAND USE PLANNING CONTROLS**

The State Party has previously reported significant progress in regulating and monitoring all kinds of developments in and around the property. Since the last State of Conservation report (2013), the State Party has finalized the development of an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) for the area comprising the property and its immediate surroundings. The EMF will contribute significantly to the protection of the OUV as it provides guidance on the kinds of land uses that can take place in and around the property.

The State Party is satisfied that the introduction of the EMF will contribute significantly to the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value as it will reduce the incidents of incompatible developments.

#### **3.2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

The State Party previously reported that a Management Authority will be established once a business plan required by National Treasury is completed. The process on developing the Business plan is only underway now and it is being led by the private Landowners. This process could not be undertaken earlier as planned. This was due to another demand by the private Landowners that they drive the development of the Business Plan. This resulted in a long period of paralysis when the State Party and the Landowners could not reach an immediate agreement on the matter. The issue has now been resolved and the State Party has now made available resources to enable the land owners to develop the business case. The State Party has given the Landowners until March 2015 to submit the business case. Once the Business case is finalized, a decision will be made by National Treasury regarding the nature of the Management Authority.

In order to mitigate the impact of the delay with the appointment of a Management Authority, the State Party is now at an advanced stage towards the appointment of a Project Manager at a very senior level. The Project Manager is being appointed on a full time two year contract and would be supported by officials seconded by both the North West and Free State provincial governments. The Project Manager will also assist in speeding up all outstanding matters such as establishment of Management Authority, finalization and proclamation of regulations and also proclamation of the property in terms of national legislation.

The State Party is working very hard to ensure that the Management Authority is appointed

### **3.3 PREPARATION OF REGULATIONS AND GUIDE MATERIAL FOR THE EFFECTIVE ON-GROUND MANAGEMENT BY THE AUTHORITY**

The State Party has as reported in the 2013 State of Conservation developed draft Regulations for the Administration of Vredefort Dome in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act of 2003 as well as draft Regulations to govern the activities of the Management Authority in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act, (Act No. 49 of 1999). The finalization and proclamation of these regulations is however dependent on the establishment of the Management Authority as the Landowners also want that process to precede any other activity.

## **4. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2010 MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 PRESENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY TO VISITORS**

An Interpretation Centre has been constructed near the town of Vredefort. The centre will be the focal point for site interpretation. Exhibitions have not yet been installed however due to some structural defects which the State Party is currently addressing. The Centre will be operated by the Management Authority once appointed.

### **4.2 THE ALIGNMENT OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE BUFFER ZONE WITH EXISTING FARM CADASTRES**

As stated in the 2013 report, this process which will require an application for a minor boundary modification, will be handled as a priority by the Management Authority once appointed.

### **4.3 VISITOR ACCESS AND ASSOCIATED SITE PROTECTION MECHANISMS**

The issues relating to visitor access and site protection have been fully addressed in the draft regulations. Once the regulations are proclaimed, access to the site will be regulated accordingly. In the meantime visitors can access public areas as well as