

# Tourism plays a pivotal role in North West's economic growth

The North West Department of Tourism has been mandated with ensuring that the province becomes a preferred tourist destination to influence practical and tangible socio-economic change.

In realising the goal, the provincial government separated tourism from other economic components of government to make it a stand-alone, which made it a unique case in the country. The department was then mandated to reposition and re-brand the province in order to stimulate increased domestic and international tourism traffic and further increased tourism business investment and transformation within the sector. This includes creating sound public and private sector partnerships and also manifesting a change within the tourism sector in the province.



MEC Desbo Mohono addresses tourism stakeholders at the 20 Years Celebration of Tourism Achievements

Speaking during *The New Age Business Briefing on Agriculture, Culture and Tourism* held recently at the Rio Casino Hotel in Klerksdorp, MEC Desbo Mohono, said that although the department is only just over a year and few months old, tremendous progress has been recorded within the sector.

## Hidden jewels

"With the amount of deliverables we have put out, one might disagree that this department is only one year and few months old. The department has played a pivotal role in ensuring adequate and much needed economic stimulation in our villages, townships and small towns while also promoting and marketing various rare and hidden jewels which the province have to offer to the rest of the world," she added.

The department has embarked on various marketing activations and also supported some economically game changing projects while taking in its stride some of the most daring partnerships with local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and also formed partnerships with some of the biggest brand properties in the private tourism sector.

Through the A Re Yeng Bokone Bophirima brand property, an aggressive marketing platform created to market and sell the province, the department has managed to market and promote the province at some of South Africa's prominent platforms like the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, the Durban Tourism Indaba, Meetings Africa Travel Show, the Durban July and the South African Music Awards and ensured that the province remains home of these awards.

## **Creating a value chain**

"The phenomenon of promoting villages, townships and small towns is the epitome of direct economic input and in order for this to be a success, we need to partner with those in sector so that as government we can create a value chain which yields desired impact on our economy," acting head of the department, Charles Ndabeni, said.

"The narrative has to change and we have to see serious socio-economically driven change through tourism prosperity in small towns like Bray where there is an annual horse race with a different Kalahari experience. Village towns like Taung also have great potential of becoming the hub of culture and heritage tourism because it boosts such untainted cultural norms and practices. There is also a great deal of preservation of our heritage in that part of our province," he said.

The department has recently announced that it has completed three key strategies which will see the tourism sector moving to greater heights and ensure adequate promotion and marketing of events, heritage and cultural tourism. The three key strategies are the provincial tourism sector strategy, the provincial heritage and cultural tourism strategy and the provincial events tourism strategy. These strategies will allow the department as the custodians of tourism in the province to have a direct input in the regulation of tourism business in the province.

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