

DE,HEL CONSTANTIA

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

De Hel Heritage Project

Fund raising proposal

Purpose of the proposal:

The De Hel Project seeks to rehabilitate land designated as a Western Cape Heritage site by act of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape on March 23, 2012. A total of nine erven, approximately 21 hectares, were so designated..

This valley lies between Constantia Main Road, and Southern Cross Drive, and below Constantia Nek. This area will significantly contribute to the extensive greenbelts already being maintained by the Friends of the Greenbelts, an NGO of long standing in the Constantia Valley. With some luck the De Hel Heritage site could eventually provide access to the Table Mountain National Park. It consists of 70% woodland, of which 58% is flora indigenous to De Hel and about 34% alien vegetation. The remaining 30% is fynbos, largely of the unique granite soil type. Numerous animals live on the site including the Cape Clawless Otter, the leopard toad and a colony of Knysna Warbler.

The Cape City Council is the owner of the property. They are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the site, security, specialist conservation input and coordination of liaison between the various organs of the Council. However, the City Council is unable to contribute the significant investment required to upgrade the capital infrastructure of De Hel into a heritage site of note for easy public access.

Historically, De Hel represented the cradle of the woodcutting industry from 1657 to 1754, after the timber in Newlands forest was stripped. The Dutch East India Company relied on this (one of four) heavily wooded outposts for building and ship repair material. They had a small taskforce stationed there to extract indigenous timber, with the help of convict and slave labour. Timber was brought down the mountain on ancient cattle tracks established by the Khoi-Khoi pastoralists. Witteboomen also became one of the way stations for slave runaways. At the bottom of the valley, in the meadow woodcutters cottages were established along with the cultivating of fruit trees.

In the first instance, it is envisaged that this area will be used by local schools as a means of making history, biology and botany come alive. Through a collection of information center posters, the area will be attractively and comprehensively signed, highlighting all of the aspects of the valley's attributes.

Secondly, this area is beloved by the local community as an area for walking dogs, joggers, having picnics and generally enjoying nature. To date the area, overgrown and largely inaccessible, is succumbing to alien vegetation, and mis-use by vagrants and bark strippers.

Proposal supporters:

This funding proposal is supported in the first instance by the Constantia Property Owners Association and the Friends of the Constantia Valley Greenbelts. Both of these organisations are registered community organisations within their respective civil society structures. The CPOA was established in 1950 and has a respected pedigree in supporting initiatives for and working towards the beneficial development of the valley so that the rich heritage can be preserved for all. These organisations gained their legitimacy through the support of their members, residents of the Valley. Additionally, the CPOA established the Constantia Valley Trust a number of years ago to house tax

free donations and bequests given in the recognition that there would be future demands on resources to preserve the Valley.

The Project will be managed by the De Hel Liaison Committee comprised of members from Heritage Western Cape, the City's Parks, other City representatives, the Constantia Greenbelts, the CPOA, residents, an archeologist and a member of the Constantia Valley Trust.

Proposal parcels of capital cost:

1: To promote De Hel as a public amenity

There is a need to communicate the history, archaeological features, and the heritage, environmental and cultural significance of Del Hel to the local community and the greater Western Cape. A process of mapping and recording features of heritage value needs to take place including structures and their remains, natural features, trees and vegetation of cultural significance.

It is intended to erect educational signs at the three entrances of De He and at the Meadow Information Center. These custom made signs/posters will contain an informative map with pictorial and descriptive textual data describing birdlife, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees (numbered for identification), threatened granite fynbos, streams, pathways, bridges and historical, heritage and archaeological information.

Educational information will also be provided in brochure form. This would be helpful in promoting the heritage site and be educational for school children, students and local and foreign tourists.

2. To undertake a follow-up archaeological investigation.

De Hel Heritage Site promises to provide insight into the lives of the earliest foresters stationed at the Cape. The area in question has not been developed since it was used as an early woodcutter's post. An archaeological investigation promises to provide some glimpses into this unrecorded past.

A first phase archaeological impact assessment was conducted in 2006 by Dr. Seeman and identified the footings of an L-shaped building as well as a possible refuse dump containing several fragments of Chinese porcelain and British refined earthenware.

Further work has the potential to provide, as it did at Paradise (in Newlands Forest), an indication of the construction history of any buildings on the site, as well as how the inhabitants of De Hel (Witte Boomen Post) lived. Domestic refuse may still survive in association and the excavation and analysis thereof would further enhance our understanding of the use of De Hel as an early woodcutter post (occupied by a master woodcutter and up to 14 woodcutters at any one time), and later by British military personnel (Lieutenant – Colonel John Hamilton, Commander of the garrison at Wynberg, his wife Lady Emily Hamilton and General Francis Dundas during the late 1790s and William Duckitt, Inspector of Government Lands between 1810 and 1813).

The scope of work to be undertaken includes:

- Desktop study enhancing work done by Dr. Seeman and looking at relationships with the Newlands Forest site.
- A Walking survey of the entire site to identify, reconfirm and map by marking historical routes and tracks, surface remains of structures and identification of plantings associated with historical usages.
- Limited subsurface investigation will establish the extend of archaeological remains.

3. To provide and rehabilitate primary access routes for visitors and maintenance work vehicles.

Upgrade the parking and access to the jeep track at both Constantia Nek road and Southern Cross Drive..

Re-establish access to the Old Meadow from the junction of Pear Lane and Gemini Way with the provision of a boardwalk to benefit access for the walking public during the winter. This is expensive. The work includes a 160 meter boardwalk, some steps and 2 small bridges..

The entire old Jeep track to the Meadow which descends from the Constantia Main Road requires hard surface rehabilitation in order to permit all weather council access to remove cleared alien vegetation and trees. It also serves as a public footpath. This road repair requires major expenditure but is urgently required to the Meadow to permit work on De Hel to proceed. This work will comprise grading of the surface; lining of the prepared surface with a geo-fabric material and the laying of 250 meters of cement grass block surfacing.

4. To remove all alien meadow vegetation and cut a path down the river to Gemini Way.

The area is extensively covered in alien vegetation. To clear the entire area will take years but it is proposed that a start be made. The proposed work will take some 10 days by a team of job trained labourers under professional supervision. Thereafter, as the Council has resources available, further clearing can be done. Alternatively, Working for Water teams from the Parks Board might be enlisted.

Budget

The following estimates (incl. VAT) are based on professional quotations:

<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Funding Estimate</u>	
<u>1: To promote De Hel as a public amenity:</u>		
The provision of three access information boards and and 8 panel Information Center in the Meadow	R 49500	
The provision of information/education brochures	R 10000	
The numbering of trees	R 7500	
		R 67000
<u>2: To undertake follow-up archaeological work:</u>		
Desktop study	R 5 000	
Walking Survey	R 5 000	
Limited surface investigation and provision of heritage map	R15 000	
		R 25,000
<u>3: To provide a board walk and to rehabilitate the access track to the Meadow:</u>		
Board walk, steps and bridges to Gemini Way	R450 000	
Jeep track access to the Meadow	R320 000	
		R 770 000
<u>4: To remove alien vegetation from Meadow and river:</u>		
	R41 000	
		R 41 000
<u>Total funding estimate</u>		<u>R 903 000</u>

Funding :

It is unlikely that we will be able to secure one single benefactor. Therefore, special benefactors in the Valley are now being approached for a one off donation. All funds will be managed by the Constantia Valley Trust, which is able to provide the required tax documentation. Recognition of the benefactors can be arranged as each individual desires.

Summary

The De Hel Project is a significant proposal in the context of preserving the heritage of the Constantia Valley. The early history and unique Afro-Mountain biodiversity of De Hel is regarded as the Jewel in the Crown of Constantia's riverine cultural landscape. So much has already been removed from preservation possibilities through neglect. Thus, it would be a shame to let these remaining features also succumb to inactivity.

The one off sums required are substantial. However, the means to divide the project into manageable financing parcels should make securing the required donations more attractive.

More detailed information is available upon request, either in written form or through personal discussions with some of the stakeholders.