



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
FORESTRY AND TOURISM



PRESS RELEASE

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SANDWICH HARBOUR MANAGEMENT SHUTTLE/GUIDING SERVICE CONCESSION

In line with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 2017 (Act 3 of 2017), The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) advertised the Sandwich Harbour Management Shuttle /Guiding Concession in a competitive tender on 28 March 2024. The advertised tender called on interested entities to submit proposals for managing Sandwich Harbour which is a RAMSAR inscribed site. The decision was taken considering that Sandwich Harbour is in a remote location, which makes it difficult for MEFT to constantly monitor and control.

Today, the toilets stand in a state of disrepair, without proper cleaning and maintenance. Thirdly, there has been considerable and visible environmental degradation caused by mostly self-drive tourists who drive on undesignated tracks and by motor vehicle clubs which use the area to test their vehicles. Fourth, there are also records of accidents some fatal due to inexperienced and reckless drivers driving unguided. Tourists and visitors litter the area, which presents an environmental hazard. Lastly, some tour operators enter the area illegally without paying park entrance fees for their clients. Spot checks done by MEFT found a lot of tour operators with clients inside Sandwich Harbour without the necessary permits. These illegal tours are not accounted for and are a significant loss in revenue for the State.

On this basis, this concession is designed to address these challenges. Therefore, the successful bidder will have rights to man the entrance gate to ensure that only permit holders enter the area; maintain the ablution facilities; operate a shuttle/guide service to Sandwich Harbour for self-driving tourists; guide all motor club related activities, such as Amarok, Jeep clubs, BMW excursions and others; construct and operate a non-permanent structure kiosk at the entrance gate; to charge a minimal fee to all users which will be determined by the Ministry.

MEFT is aware of complaints from some sections of the public objecting to the tender process.



The The complaints are based on concerns that the Concession is exclusive and will only benefit one company; the Concession will make it expensive to enter Sandwich Harbour and make Namibia an expensive tourist destination and that it will result in government losing revenue. Complaints are not based on facts, but aimed at creating and abetting anarchy. The complaints can only be from companies that are concerned only with their own income and do not want Government to get revenue. These are companies that are either misinformed or a deliberately sabotaging interventions by the Ministry so that they to continue with illegal tours and driving in undesignated areas.

In light of these complaints, the Ministry would like to clarify that the concession will in no way prohibit other tour operators from assessing Sandwich Barbour for business. There will be no limits set on tour operators entering Sandwich Harbour. This has been communicated on several occasions to all tourism stakeholders who conduct business in the area. This was done firstly through a meeting held at the Narraville Community Hall, Walvis Bay with all companies operating inside Sandwich Harbour in February 2023 and again on 18 March 2024 at the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources' Auditorium in Swakopmund. The tender documents given to bidders also articulate how the Concession will operate.

In comparison with similar destinations in the region indicate that Namibia remains a competitive tourist destination. In Zimbabwe, park entrance fees are N\$500 for SADC tourists and N\$1000 for international tourists. In Zambia, entrance fees are N\$400 for SADC tourists and N\$500 for international tourists. In Botswana the entrance fees are N\$283 for SADC tourists and N\$373 for international tourists, while in South Africa, entrance fees are N\$257 for SADC tourists and N\$535 for international tourists. Kenya charges entrance fees of USD100 and for the high season tourism and USD80 for the low season and Tanzania charges entrance fees of USD70 for the high tourism season and USD35 for the low season. By comparison, Namibia currently charges N\$50 for locals, N\$100 for SADC tourist and N\$150 for international tourists. Although these fees will be reviewed in the next financial year in line with the country's regulations, areas like Sandwich Harbour which have a special management arrangement will not be subjected to the increase. The Ministry will ensure that the amount charged by the successful bidder for entering Sandwich Harbour does not jeopardize the country's position as a preferred and competitive tourist destination.

The mandate of MEFT is to promote tourism through finding the best ways to cater for tourists' safety and comfort. Tourism Concessions play a critical role in the management and monitoring of the country's natural resources as well as ensuring that our National Parks contribute to the economy of the country. The Sandwich Harbour Concession will make sure that the area remains a well-kept and preserved tourism destination like all other destinations across the country. The successful bidder will maintain the ablution facilities in a working and clean state at all times, which is an advantage for all the tour operators.

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