

Name: Creation of Amphitheatre, Hillside Dams Conservancy

Location: Hillside Dams, off Banff Road, Hillside, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Objectives: to build a small amphitheatre in a natural location near the Upper Dam wall for use in cultural events.

General Background

The Hillside Dams were once a popular recreational area operated by Bulawayo City Council (BCC). However it has fallen on hard times what with financial difficulties, a lack of vision and application, and several serious criminal incidents. This has resulted in the existing facilities being allowed to deteriorate while the area is now shunned by most local residents.

The entire area, approximately 86ha., has been leased from the BBC by Mungrisdale Marketing (Pvt) Ltd who has conceded the conservancy area to an independent, broad-based Trust, the Hillside Dams Conservation Trust. This non-profit Trust has been tasked with the restoration of existing facilities and developing new, appropriate projects in the area in line with the defined aims of the Trust which place an emphasis on conservation, education and recreational pursuits all within a safe, well-run recreational area aimed principally at the residents of Bulawayo.

The conservancy includes a large section of natural vegetation as well as two dams built amongst the rocky kopjes at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. There are also several gardened sections, including what was once an impressive aloe garden. Several archaeological and fossil sites in the area are of a national, if not international importance. Previously there was a trim track on the east side of the conservancy while several youth organizations once used this area for camping and educational purposes.

Project objectives

While we appreciate the serious financial situation in which we find ourselves in Zimbabwe today, we are looking at practical assistance from companies and individuals with various skills and interests – we are not seeking financial contributions. It must be emphasized that this appeal is being made on behalf of the general Bulawayo Community and not simply ourselves.

A detailed Site Management Plan has been drawn up (Burrett 2007). This document provides some suggestions as to the way forward and sets out the ultimate objectives towards which we operate. It is a long to medium term policy which will be tackled by the Trust as and when the finances and skills are available. The focus of this specific proposal forms part of the overall plan.



The proposed area to be developed

The purpose of this document is to appeal for assistance in creating an outdoor amphitheatre in a suitable location along the path between the Upper and Lower Dams. This is easily reached from the existing car park at the “Aloe Garden” which is at the most 150m from the chosen location. At this point there already exists a semicircular depression at the base of a narrow valley in the rocky hillside. This position has a wonderful setting while noise would also be reflected from the rocks beyond and it should not impact on adjacent

residential properties. The existing depression could easily be sculptured to create ranked seating while the central point, adjacent to the path, could be constructed to form the stage.

We envisage that this amphitheatre would be used for various cultural events including music, lectures and poetry reading. It is probably not suitable for drama as there will be no backstage facilities as these additions would otherwise spoil the natural setting of this location. It is hoped that an electrical connection will be possible. The Trust staff will then be responsible for maintenance and cleaning. Once erected we would expect potential users to book the facility a head of time and contribute something towards its running costs – it should not be excessive and we hope a variety of different users will be attracted.

We, the Hillside Dams Conservancy Trust are requesting your help in this project. We seek someone to help us out with the construction of the amphitheatre:

- 1. Payment of labour to clear the necessary area of invasive plants and sculpturing the slope to a suitable shape.**
- 2. Purchase of construction material – cement, bricks, sand and gravel.**
- 3. Purchase or loan of building equipment.**
- 4. assistance in extending power connection to this location from the old Tea Room.**

Our estate manager will be available to discuss with the donor what needs to be done and to assist with anything that is required both before and during the work. He will also oversee its construction – he was responsible for a similar construction at Gordon Park (the Boy Scout property) in the Matopos.

All assistance will be suitably acknowledged and donors/companies will be able to use this for purposes of advertising or addressing issues of corporate responsibility. Signage with logos at select locations would be suitable.

If you are able to assist please contact the Estate Manager, Hillside Dams Conservancy, Mr. Norman Scott or Neil Rix 011-402851.