



BLUFF WHALE HERITAGE SITE

❖ **Sodurba Community Tourism Organisation**
Action Plan Report – January 2022



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I. Executive Summary

Highlights

- Events, particularly the Welcoming of the Whales Festival, engender a sense of pride in cetaceans in the area. These festivals have grown and 2022 saw 23 festivals along the east coast of Africa, spreading the news.
- WildOceans significant involvement and support of the WHS application, and the collaboration between WildOceans, WESSA and Sodurba provides a sound basis for further sustainable development of the site.
- The government managed permit system encourages sustainable practices and respectful whale watching through clearly defined guidelines.
- There are adjacent Marine Protected Areas and an ongoing need for further protected status in order to mitigate against a range of environmental threats.

- Media presence and Awareness of Bluff Whale Heritage Site is ongoing
- Created exciting Tourism activities – guided tours and various attractions
- Social Awareness – social media is ongoing with a growing social footprint
- After Sodurba was forced to cancel the 2020 festival due to the worldwide pandemic, we the fourth annual “Welcoming of the Whales” Festival in June 2021 under difficult Covid-19 Regulations. Very small Indoor and outdoor gatherings were allowed, but we managed to see approximately 2000 visitors during the course of the day.
- Tour Operators and Tour Guides has shown keen interest to package the WHS experience but were forced to put on hold due to Covid-19. Slow recovery is taking place in 2022.
- 3 Land based viewpoints have been developed with Information Boards and whale tale benches along the Bluff Coastline.
- The Old Whaling Station was identified and the potential to be recognized internationally and turned to the biggest Whaling History Museum – this long-term project was put on hold due to the international pandemic. Further research has resumed in late 2021
- Our Route includes sea-based Whale Watching up close under very strict guidelines as well as land-based viewing. A WhatsApp group was created where whale sightings are reported daily during the whale season.
- Created Media presence and Awareness of Bluff Whale Heritage Site in local newspapers as well as social media: Website, Facebook Pages and twitter – this is ongoing. Projects are in place to start branding the destination and get more local stakeholders involved.
- Sodurba commissioned the second Creation of a Whale Structure and is called “Infinity”. Final permission has been requested to install permanently.
- The Designed flyers to promote Bluff Whale Heritage Site is now electronic – no more printing to be more eco-friendly.
- Engages with eThekwini, Durban Tourism and all stakeholders - ongoing

Objectives

AWARENESS OF BLUFF WHS

- Sustainable Management – the committee is in place and working hard to develop the WHS further. Unfortunately, Covid-19 lockdown regulations has interfered. Momentum is picking up in beginning of 2022
- Development of Responsible Whale Watching Practices - ongoing
- To promote responsible Whale Watching Tours to attract locals and visitors - ongoing.
- Old Whaling Station. To have the building registered and recognized as a heritage Site. To renovate and turn into a Museum – to exhibit the numerous memorabilia and preserve Durban’s Whaling History. Giving insight on where our Maritime Heritage route started with hunting the Whale to where we have now come to a Conservation Era where all whales, dolphins and sea life are protected and admired. To create a

Tourism Hub and create job opportunities. Steps have been taken in this regard and engagements with stakeholders have already taken place. The national pandemic has put a halt to all but the steering committee will engage further. As this is a long-term project, we also suggest an additional Tourism Office. This project is in the hands of the site owners (Transnet-Portnet) as well as eThekweni Municipality and various local stakeholders. Talks have resumed in late 2021 after the project was put on hold due the pandemic restrictions.

- Establish a Tourism Information Centre with Whale Museum/education/visitor's center. A place to become an important base for research, education, and advocacy, and also be a key visitor attraction for the area. Staffed largely by volunteers and thereby engage the local community to become whale docents/naturalists and ambassadors. The center will also encourage further interest in the renovation of the derelict whaling station – An interim site has been identified and awaiting permission.

DEVELOPMENT OF BLUFF WHS

- Staff exchange visit with seasoned responsible whale watching business in South Africa.
 - Isle of Capri Cruises (Durban), Advantage Tours and Charters (St Lucia) and Richards Bay Advantage Tours have been working closely since 2010
 - Isle of Capri Cruises and Whale and Dolphin Tours Durban did exchange staff this last season.
- Joining one or more eco label certification programs - Eco Mark Africa (Due to Lockdown and Covid 19 nothing realized).
- Continuing the process of guides training through the WildOceans program - WhaleTime Guides from WildOceans accompany every Whale and Dolphin Watching trip
- To Encouraging further scientific output by granting academic students access to whale watching –
 - Internships for Tourism Students of UKZN are in place
 - Currently Encouraging Local Tourists and Communities to become Whale Ambassadors
 - Currently Educating all staff working for the legal permit holders about responsible Whale Watching and taking them also on tours, so that they can become ambassadors themselves and also give information to clients that comes for other trips. Boats as platforms, or engaging in citizen science projects linked to ongoing research such as that carried out by Wild Oceans -
- To Encouraging further engagement between whale watching businesses and local community members, such as free trips for local schools - Discounted/free trips for Whale watchers/spotters' group, educational trips for schools, giving scholars pamphlets with information on Whales and other marine life are in place.
- Collaborative projects run by both whale watching businesses in partnership are in place.
- Plans are in place to develop and construct more viewing decks for land-based whale watching.
- To assist where possible in achieving Blue Flag Status for Brighton Beach and Ansteys Beach.

LINK DURBAN PUBLICITY ASSOCIATIONS WITH BLUFF WHS

- In place and ongoing - To advertise Sodurba by means of press advertisements, brochures, electronic media, signage, pictures, videos or in any other way that is desirable and to attain such objectives as contained in this document, in conjunction with other municipalities, government departments, publicity associations and other bodies or institutes.

Mission Statement

Collectively and boldly developing and promoting the BLUFF WHALE HERITAGE SITE as part of KZN Whale Coast® as responsible, exciting, creative and sustainable tourism to benefit the local community and stakeholders and to Encouraging Respectful Human-Cetacean Coexistence.

II. Products and Services

- *The Bluff WHS products and services are not only Tourism related but also includes research and conservation projects. The Bluff Whale Heritage Site in Durban offers huge potential for Tourism.*

WILDOCEANS

CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

- WHALETIME guides:

Challenge

The WhaleTime project continues to collaborate with the Port Natal Maritime Museum, the KZN Coastal College and local boat-based whale watching operators in training new WhaleTime tour guides, giving them practical skills in the workplace, and creating job opportunities. WILDOCEANS have partnered with the local Youth Employment Service programme (YES) and Nedbank to provide workplace opportunities for local unemployed youth. However due to COVID-19 restrictions at the Port Natal Maritime Museum, no new guides were recruited this year.

Progress

In 2021, WhaleTime guides presented tours to 460 learners from eleven schools. In addition to the school tours, the guides gave tours to 1272 walk-in guests. WhaleTime has extended the term of two senior guides who train the new, 2022 Youth Employment Service programme (YES) interns as guides. The WhaleTime project will also strive to continue its relationship with the KZN Coastal College by allowing their students to conduct their in-service training as WhaleTime guides. These new guides will also be trained to present the old whaling station tour at the WHS.

- Conservation/ Projects/Program:

Challenge

WILDOCEANS MSc student Bianca Tree, is conducting research on the population structure and migration links of the Southern African humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) using photo-identification techniques.

Presently there is no single photo identification catalogue available for South Africa. This study aims to collate as many historic humpback whale fluke images available for the C1 sub-stock, into an east coast photo-identification catalogue. New images were also collected within the KwaZulu-Natal region during various dedicated data collection initiatives and boat-based whale watching opportunities, and field studies around Bazaruto, Mozambique and incorporated into the catalogue. The catalogue currently contains nearly 2000 unique humpback whale fluke images from 1988 to 2019, which are in the process of being compared within and between years. Totals of 13 within-year matches, and 21 between-year matches have been obtained to date, with the between-year matching process only 50% complete. It is anticipated that matching results will provide valuable information on the intra-region population structure, site-fidelity trends, and current population status in terms of abundance of the C1 humpback whale population.

The catalogue will also be used in the future for comparison against other regional catalogues within the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), which will aid in providing more accurate information of the inter-region stock structure of the C-stock humpback whales and is consequently viewed as an important population management tool.

EDUCATION – WESSA

WESSA Treasure Beach Education Science Centre has been quite involved in WESSA On Wheels (WOW) programme. The programme aims to support learners that have struggled during the hard time of the pandemic (Covid19). The programme rendered a curriculum support in those needy schools by running a practical hand on activities. The programme was a good one as it helped learners to understand subjects better.

The environmental awareness programme was carried throughout the day and learners were taught about the importance of our marine biodiversity and why it should be protected, that was demonstrated by using some of the topics they in class like marine food chain and food web, and life cycle of the sea organism. The problem we encountered during our WOW enviro awareness kids find it a little bit tricky to follow the whole marine life without seeing them as some of the learners have never been to sea. A trip to the rocky shores would have been quite beneficial, but due to covid 19 restriction we were unable to invite the schools to our science centre for them to learn more. A beach clean-ups together with education along with along the shore have been quite successful in doing environmental awareness. WHS will bring about many changes and will improve the tourism of the area of Bluff and the whole of Durban South Basin. WESSA Education Centre will improve. This year we are looking forward running more educational Environmental Awareness Education programme & Whale viewing at treasure beach in the Bluff area. Lacking of funds is one of the major issues that the centre is facing to keep it running and well maintained and make it more attractive for whale viewing. The blue flags assistant in providing beach steward has been quite helpful as they would now and then during the holidays in the Bluff area as they would run few Environmental awareness programmes with holiday makers. Whale heritage site will provide more opportunity for all our guest and school group to learn more about the importance of those aquatic mammal and whole lot of organisms associates. Tourism in the South Durban Basin will improve a lot so to increase the revenue of Durban South.

WESSA TRESASUR BEACH

Is the of getting SA ASA intern that will be based in the bluff ,their focus will be more in marine science program and will be more involved in doing research on certain marine organism .

The 2021 Welcoming of the whales was quite good in providing more education on the importance of whale and other marine creatures. We were also running education programme like waste management and how does it affect our marine life.

ANNUAL EVENT

- Annual Event for “Welcoming of the Whales” 1st week of June – Covid-19 forced us to cancel our 2020 festival but managed to have one again 2021 . We are positive that tourism in general will make a recovery in 2022

WHS RETAIL

- To have local entrepreneurs in place to promote their QUALITY products (all with not only the Whale theme but also local culture). It is our hope that with the various destination branding projects we have in place – murals, flags, banners etc, it will encourage all local stakeholders to come on board. E.g. Restaurants to have a whale theme during whale season etc.
- Jewelry – The WHS Information Office will accommodate local traders are waiting to offer their hand made goods. Beaded Whale Tail keyrings are available.
- Clothing – WildOceans recently released shirts in Mr Price outlets. Welcoming of the Whales shirts and caps are available.
- Cosmetics – “Welcoming of the Whales” sun block is available
- Shoes – ongoing ideas in place
- Accommodation – various Bed and Breakfast, guest houses and self-catering accommodation is available offering stunning sea views and land-based whale watching along Bluff WHS.
- Spa Treatments – local spas
- Post Cards – Various ideas are in place to create post cards from whale photography and art pieces
- Pop-up shops (designer containers) – a vision for the Whaling Station
- Browsing/shopping at the many curio shops at Wilson's Wharf – The city is in the process of establishing an Urban Improvement Precinct at Wilson's Wharf. We are hoping with this UIP, the WHS can be promoted through all shops .

WHS ARTS AND CRAFTS

- Paintings still to come
- Carvings still to come
- Sculptures – 2 aluminum whale structures designed and manufactured
- Souvenirs still to come

WHS FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

- Craft Beer and wine

- Confectionary
- Enjoy a “Whale of a Time” relaxing beverage or meal at one of the viby restaurants at Wilson's Wharf.
- Existing Restaurants to display Bluff WHS memorabilia e.g Whale Tale Menu Holder

ACCOMMODATION

- To identify our world class establishments with whale viewing opportunities and identified with WHS Logo.

REGENERATION OF BLUFF WHS AREA

Apart from the Tourism Routes, we would like to embark on a “**Regeneration**” Drive for our area in conjunction with the local authorities and creating employment opportunities. Sodurba is presently in the starting phase of the provincial and municipal PEP (Public Employment Project) and will be uplifting tourism infrastructure withing the WHS:

- Upgrade **entrance to Bluff Whale Heritage Site**
- Whale theme murals
- The second **Whale structure** in Bluff WHS

TOURS AND EXPERIENCES

Route 1

- Attract people from all over the globe – create awareness
- The Route includes **The Whale History Museum**, situated at The Maritime Museum. Visitors can stroll through the Maritime Museum exploring the boats as well as experience the Whaling History. Giving insight on where our Whale Story started with Whale Hunting for economic growth to now where we are in a Conservation era and Eco Tourism (also for economic growth) where the whales are admired and protected. Tour Guides are already in place focusing on the Whale History.
- **Wilson's Wharf.** Enjoy a cruise and responsible whale watching with legal permit holders Isle of Capri and Whale and Dolphin Tours Durban
- **Bluff Viewing Sites.** Marketed as spots to relax on the Whale Tale Bench and WHS related information boards.
- **Brighton Beach and Ansteys Beach** – PROPOSED BLUE FLAG BEACH. All development was put on hold due to the worldwide pandemic. The lifesavers buildings have been identified, as part of PEP program, to paint in Bluff WHS colours and murals.

Other Routes/Experiences within the WHS - Ongoing

The Bluff WHS also includes a vast variety of experiences:

- **Conservation Legacy Experience** (Forest and Wetland)

- **Multi-Cultural Experience: Temple Experience** – Each of these Temples have a unique history and experience to offer visitors.
- **Architectural Experience** – There are a lot of buildings in our area with great architectural significance.
- **Wilderness Leadership School**
- **Military and Cultural History Experience:**
- **Military** - Concentrated mostly at Bluff headlands. A significant World War II History to be found in Bluff WHS and surrounding area.
- **Multi-Cultural & Cultural** – The book “Breathing Spaces” by Marijke du Toit & Jenny Gordon. A book of environmental portraits of South Durban (Lamontville, Merebank & Wentworth) is inspirational.

Service

Sodurba as the only Community Tourism Organisation within the Bluff Whale Heritage Site, offers a service that no other could offer within the area. With WildOceans and all our stakeholders, we provide Information, engage with both tourists and the community. We are a marketing platform for businesses alike to gain exposure within the WHS. Engaging with Volunteers, education and take part in Intern training projects. With the main aim to develop Bluff WHS as a Responsible Tourism and Whale Watching Destination.

III. WHS Marketing

TARGET

Our Target Market are visitors both locally, nationally as well as international tourists. To have the Bluff WHS identified as an International destination for responsible whale watching

TRADEMARK

KZN Whale Coast ® belongs to Sodurba CTO and includes the Bluff WHS

ADVERTISING

- 2020/2021 SODURBA brochure.
- Sodurba Video's and focus on WHS
- Assisting Durban Tourism with the Virtual "Know Your City" with focus on WHS
- Sodurba Bluff WHS Branded Clothing – Shirts, T-shirts, hats, caps, jackets, bags umbrellas annually and during our Welcoming of the Whales event
- With a new office these products can be sold and distributed.
- Online Shopping to be considered in future.
- Branded give-aways – pens, key rings, calendars disc holders, etc., SODURBA "IN HOUSE" Marketing - Ongoing
- Develop "Bluff Whale Heritage Site Promotional Packages" marketing material.
- Pamphlets of all products offered regarding Bluff WHS and focus on responsible whale watching cruises
- To develop Maps with Bluff WHS products plus advertising.
- Tourism Routes In Place
- Daily/ Weekly / Monthly Competition Promotions – to be discussed
- Promotional Ticketing Packages linking products offered in SODURBA & other CTO's – to be discussed.
- All the above - Promotional Package for distribution to members premises on a regular sustainable cycle. (Electronic competition entry forms, guest feedback , electronic postcards, - all backed up by information on the SODURBA website) – to consider
- Sodurba website with a link to Bluff Whale Heritage Site
- Bulk E mail - ongoing
- Create public awareness of the Bluff Whale Heritage Site
- Dissemination of information regarding the responsible Whale Watching Practices and benefits
- Creating awareness of the importance of the WHS

WHS TOUR PACKAGES – on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions

Guided Whale Watching Tours and Self Guides Land based Tours are available on demand. Booking is essential. Pricing of packages is determined by stakeholder involved. Cost of transport, accommodation etc. is be considered.

Milestones still in progress

AWARENESS

- Bluff WHS Branding

EVENT

- Annual Event for “Welcoming of the Whales” festival last week of June. ACHIEVED

DEVELOPMENT

- A new premises for the Bluff WHS has been identified. The property is council owned and steps have been taken to get approval. This will be an important base for research, education, and advocacy, and also be a key visitor attraction for the area. It also can be staffed largely by volunteers and thereby engage the local community to become whale docents/naturalists and ambassadors. The local university in Durban could also be a key partner with student placements/internships helping with research, education and outreach. We are also working closely with WildOceans as well as WESSA. The Beach Stewards, focusing on the Blue Flag Beaches are interns and can provide education to beach goers. To create a venue where Whale Time can have an information kiosk, create awareness and get the citizen scientists up and running.
- View Sites – Way-Finder boards with educational information, deck and Whale Tale Benches ACHIEVED
- More Signage at designated venues and Information Boards
- To gain momentum regarding the recognition of the The Old Whaling Station building, renovate and turn into a museum and a Tourist Attraction. This site can also be used by research and other Whale Time Projects, focussing on the conservation of our Whales.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

- Design and Print pocket brochures available for visitors with direction for all WHS experiences incl Map. ACHIEVED
- Design and print new Flyers. ACHIEVED and also available online

REGENERATION

- To help with a regeneration for Bluff Heritage Site – e.g. Eco Friendly and responsible Shops and businesses to offer Business and Job Creation possibilities

IV. Description

Location

- Bluff Whale Heritage Site encompasses the Bluff, Merebank, Wentworth, Austerville, Treasure Beach, Jacobs, Clairwood and Wilson's Wharf, beach and ocean area.
- Office – presently closed and awaiting new site.

Information Office - closed

Although our Information Office is closed at present, we are working toward having a fully functional Information office once again, with the vision is to expand and establish a Tourism Information Centre with Whale Museum/education/visitors centre. A place to become an important base for research, education, and advocacy, and also be a key visitor attraction for the area. Staffed largely by volunteers and thereby engage the local community to become whale docents/naturalists and ambassadors. The centre will also encourage further interest in the renovation of the derelict whaling station. Unfortunately the local authorities and stakeholders who need to give permission, are dragging their feet.

Hours of Operation - closed

Steering Committee

- iii. Bluff WHS Committee consists of the following:
 - 1. Helga du Preez – Sodurba CTO
 - 2. Masha Ramsamocch - WildOceans
 - 3. Amanda Janse Van Rensburg – Isle of Capri
 - 4. Josh Thomson – Whale and Dolphin Tours
 - 5. Kevin Lakani - WESSA
 - 6. Whaling History: Dave Nielsen & Emil Unger
 - 7. Marketing: Melissa Lee
 - 8. Local Councilor – Zoe Solomon
 - 9. Durban Tourism Representative

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