

# THE AFRICAN WORLD HERITAGE FUND

## WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: GREAT ZIMBABWE WORLD HERITAGE SITE



Report 1



GREAT ZIMBABWE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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# 1. Background and Introduction

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**T**he African World Heritage Funds has a mandate to support the effective conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage in Africa. Though effective investment and sustainable management, Africa's World Heritage Sites will be catalysts and frontrunners in stimulating broad-based socio-economic growth for the benefit of its people.

These objectives translate into several activities of which "conservation and site management" forms a key component. The fund wants to understand how best to develop Africa's WHSs and unlock their potential benefits for neighbouring communities and stakeholders through tourism.

In close cooperation with the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the ComMark Trust (Now ComMark Tourism Trust), the AWHF is undertaking a series of situation analysis aimed at ensuring local economic development and creating acceptable mechanisms of sharing costs and benefits with those living with protected resources.

A short list of sites has been carefully selected to incorporate a variety of sites whose analysis can be beneficial for similar sites across the continent. Emphasis during this phase is placed on covering a wide variety of **natural** and **cultural** heritage to allow for a comparison with other documented systems of resource management across Africa. Criteria for selection include:

<b>Type of heritage site</b>	For cultural sites these include rock art, buildings, complete towns, ruins, religious sites, etc. For natural sites, these include national parks and sacred natural forests and wildlife reserves.
<b>Setting</b>	A mix of urban, peri-urban and rural sites is chosen as it influences, amongst others, community involvement, pressure of carrying capacity and benefit distribution issues.
<b>Listing</b>	ranging from recent to some 30 years ago to understand evolution of management arrangements
<b>Threat</b>	Low or high threat levels to the conservation of the site influences the possibilities of tourism as a tool for economic benefits and a contribution to conservation.
<b>Community involvement</b>	This includes amongst others, level of formal involvement, perceived relationship, opportunities and community organisation.
<b>Tourism use</b>	Current (visitor numbers) and potential for tourism utilisation at the resource and the management & control of tourism in general. This is to be quantified into actual jobs and/or income generating opportunities. Sites from traditional (high-use) and non-traditional tourism destinations have therefore been chosen.
<b>Market linkages</b>	Instances of high local use and value of the heritage site create different dynamics compared to sites with high international drawing power. This is especially the case with religious sites and these have therefore been included.

<b>Benefit sharing</b>	<b>What mechanisms are currently in place to share benefits from the site. Community based conservation sites will be compared to those where such is not formalised.</b>
<b>Access</b>	Access to sites can be actively controlled (fencing) or is naturally controlled through weather/seasonal influences of other factors influencing the management of the site.
<b>Location</b>	Where the site is located in relation to urban and/or tourism centres influences the appropriate management systems and has been incorporated in the short list.

ComMark Tourism’s objectives aim to create a meaningful participation of the poor in tourism across Africa as consumers, employees and entrepreneurs. In addition to addressing policy and regulatory reform on a national level, Commark feels that good practice can speed up the transformation agenda of the tourism system in individual countries to become more beneficial for the poor. Implementing such a system around iconic world heritage sites will create a high level profile and showcase appropriate tourism benefits and responsibilities for the poor.

In addition, heritage sites serve a strong local demand which forms a key requisite for the development of local tourism consumers essential to create a truly sustainable industry in Africa.

To date, site analyses at Twyfelfontein Rock Engravings (Namibia) and Kilwa Kisiwani Ruins (Tanzania) have been conducted.

### **Selection of Great Zimbabwe**

The selection of Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site is based on its management system, high visitor numbers (in the past) and location along a strategic corridor between the metropolitan area of Gauteng (Southern Africa’s largest consumer market) and Zimbabwe’s capital Harare. Field work took place in August 2009.

Visitor numbers to Zimbabwe have crashed dramatically and have reached rock-bottom in 2008 due to the political and economic situation. Domestic tourism has been severely influenced by extreme levels of inflation and limited supplies of basic goods. The well known and frequently visited monument at Great Zimbabwe has seen a decline in visitor numbers from over 120,000 people in 1996 to slightly over 20,000 in 2006 and a mere 15,442 in 2008 constituting a decline by nearly 90%.

Early 2009 has seen some form of recovery. The introduction of the US\$ dollar as currency has ensured a stable price level, stock levels in shops rising and has made it possible for both producers and consumers of tourism to support the industry. Although this means that there are signs of improvement and an increase in visitor numbers, the industry is still faced with occupancy levels that don’t support the earlier capitalisation levels. Many enterprises have (partly) closed down and/or have sent staff on un-paid leave.

The NMMZ is in many ways a high employer in the tourism industry. Although its objectives are primarily in the field of conservation and curation, the majority of staff members are involved in functions that support visitor use of the sites.

The NMMZ is therefore a very important organisation in the re-start of tourism in the country. It is responsible for iconic attractions like Victoria Falls and Great Zimbabwe that are included in all Zimbabwe itineraries. The quality of the visitor experience (in the context of this study, particularly that at Great Zimbabwe) as well as the management structure at such sites forms an essential element on which visitors will perceive the value of visiting Zimbabwe. This, in turn, affects the benefits of tourism for ordinary Zimbabweans.

The state of tourism, the role of NMMZ and the importance of Zimbabwe's proclaimed world heritage sites in (inter)national tourism itineraries, create an interesting dynamic that the situational analysis of Great Zimbabwe tries to capture and for which certain descriptive adaptations or actions that could possibly enhance the site, and its local and national contribution to both tourism and broader economic development are proposed.

## 2. Situational Analysis

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### 2.1 Historic overview

The world heritage site at Great Zimbabwe is one of the country's four proclaimed sites and was inscribed as second heritage site in 1986 after Mana Pools. The ruins of Great Zimbabwe – the capital of the Queen of Sheba, according to an age-old legend – are a unique testimony to the Bantu civilization of the Shona between the 11th and 15th centuries. The city, which covers an area of nearly 80 ha, was an important trading centre and was renowned from the middle-ages onwards.

Great Zimbabwe is located close to the regional capital of Masvingo. It is understood that Portuguese traders were the first Europeans to visit the remains of the ancient city in the early 16th century. The ruins were rediscovered during a hunting trip by Adam Renders in 1867, who then showed the ruins to Karl Mauch in 1871.



1 Great Enclosure

Mauch favoured a legend that the structures were built to replicate the palace of the Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Bent, an archaeologist with experience solely in Greece and Asia Minor, stated in *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland* (1891) that the ruins revealed either the Phoenicians or the Arabs as builders. Other theories as to their origin abounded among white settlers and academics, with one element in common: they were probably not made by sub-Saharan Africans.

The first scientific archaeological excavations at the site were undertaken by David Randall-Maclver in 1905–1906. He wrote in *Medieval Rhodesia* of the existence in the site of objects that were of African origin. In 1929, Gertrude Caton-Thompson was the first to conclusively state that the site was indeed created by Africans. Since then artifacts and radiocarbon dating indicate that the oldest remains date back to the 1200s.

Martin Hall writes that the history of Iron Age research south of the Zambezi shows the prevalent influence of colonial ideologies, both in the earliest speculations about the nature of the African past and in the adaptations that have been made to contemporary archaeological methodologies. When European colonialists like Cecil Rhodes first saw the ruins, it was seen as a sign of the great riches that the surroundings would yield to its new masters. When it was finally proved that the builders were in fact Africans, it was also characterized as "product of an infantile mind" built by a subjugated society. Later researchers confirmed this condescending view and refused to accept that Great Zimbabwe could have been a product of internal processes, but rather had to be the result of outside stimulus. After the white minority attempt at gaining independence from colonial rule in 1965 the theories about the black population having been subjugated by outside overlords

was reconfirmed. Later on, after the independence of the modern state of Zimbabwe in 1980, Great Zimbabwe has been employed to mirror and legitimise shifting policies of the ruling regime. At first it was argued that it represented a form of pre-colonial "African socialism" and later the focus shifted to stressing the natural evolution of an accumulation of wealth and power within ruling elite.

Archaeologists generally agree that the builders probably spoke one of the Shona languages. Some have postulated that Zimbabwe was the work of the Gokomere people, who gave rise to both the Warozwi people, and the Mashona people. Great Zimbabwe and various stone cities in east Africa are also claimed by the Lemba, an ethnic group who claim ancient Jewish descent. Great Zimbabwe is often cited in their totem recitation passed on to generations through oral traditions providing a strong indication of the claim. The Lemba are also the only group who has claimed to be the descendants of the builders who also share similar burial customs to those once practiced in Great Zimbabwe. Modern DNA testing has also substantiated their claims of an ancient Semitic origin.

Started during the eleventh century A.D., Great Zimbabwe was constructed and expanded for more than 300 years in a local style that eschewed rectilinearity for flowing curves. Great Zimbabwe is neither the first nor the last of some 300 similar complexes located on the Zimbabwean plateau. It is however set apart by the terrific scale of its structure. Its most formidable edifice, commonly referred to as the Great Enclosure, has walls as high as 11 m extending approximately 250 m, making it the largest ancient structure south of the Sahara Desert.

## **2.2 Site description**

The Great Zimbabwe World heritage Site is a fenced area of 722 Ha set amidst the rolling hills of the Masvingo province, close to Lake Mutirikwe. The larger area is home to many so called "Great Zimbabwe's" with the actual monument site the stunning highlight.

The official entrance is a well maintained road that leads to a small "round-about" where the reception is housed in a small rondavel.

The site can be divided into four main areas; Hill site ruins, Great enclosure & Ridge enclosure, service and facility area and the (proposed) cultural village under construction.

### **1. Hill Site Ruins:**

Three tracks lead to the top of the hill with varying degrees of ascent. Interpretation is limited to small signs naming enclosures and/or depicting no-go areas. This site is well maintained and impressive in its size and quality and offers stunning views over the other sections of the monument site and the area in general only slightly obscured by large water reservoirs on a nearby hill. The two ancient Daga Hut remains have dilapidated shade/protections structures.

## 2. Great Enclosure, Valley & Ridge Enclosure

The Great Enclosure is the “face” of the monument found in most images of the site. A small, temporary information shelter at the entrance, informed people of the renovation work ongoing but is currently not maintained and will be removed soon. Interpretation is limited to small signs naming certain enclosures and structures. The Ridge & Valley Enclosure (divided into East and West) is an interesting labyrinth of ruins and incorporates an information shelter that can be viewed from the outside only. No obvious, self-guiding sequence exists that enables a visitor to see everything.

## 3. Service and facility area:

i. **Camp site:** large grass area with two blocks of ablution facilities. The sites are not demarcated and only two lapa-style shelters are available for guests.

ii. **Accommodation:** The basic, round twin-rooms with shared ablution were originally constructed as staff accommodation for non-management employees. Larger two-bedroom units were constructed for management and dorm-style units for junior-staff. These have been revamped into guest accommodation. As usual with non-purpose build guest accommodation, none of these adhere to international standards. have self-catering set-ups which demand higher maintenance and demands appliance replacement



all

All

provisions. In August 2009, all these facilities were in need of maintenance, repairs and upgrades. The dorm style facilities, earmarked for school group visits, were in poor state. Three purpose-build luxury wood cabins have been constructed behind the two-bed room units.

2. Two-bedroom unit

iii. **Museum:** a small museum building exists with a permanent display. It requires maintenance as various display items have fallen-down, text and images have faded and become unreadable and lights are not working. A strong-room holds a display of original Zimbabwe birds.

iv. **Souvenir/curio shop:** Since August 2009, the NMMZ have taken over the management of this small, two-room outlet with storeroom which until July was managed by the African Sun’s Great Zimbabwe Hotel. No new stock was added and no business plan for the shop has been developed yet. With the withdrawal of the hotel from the shop, NMMZ has no choice but to operate the service themselves.

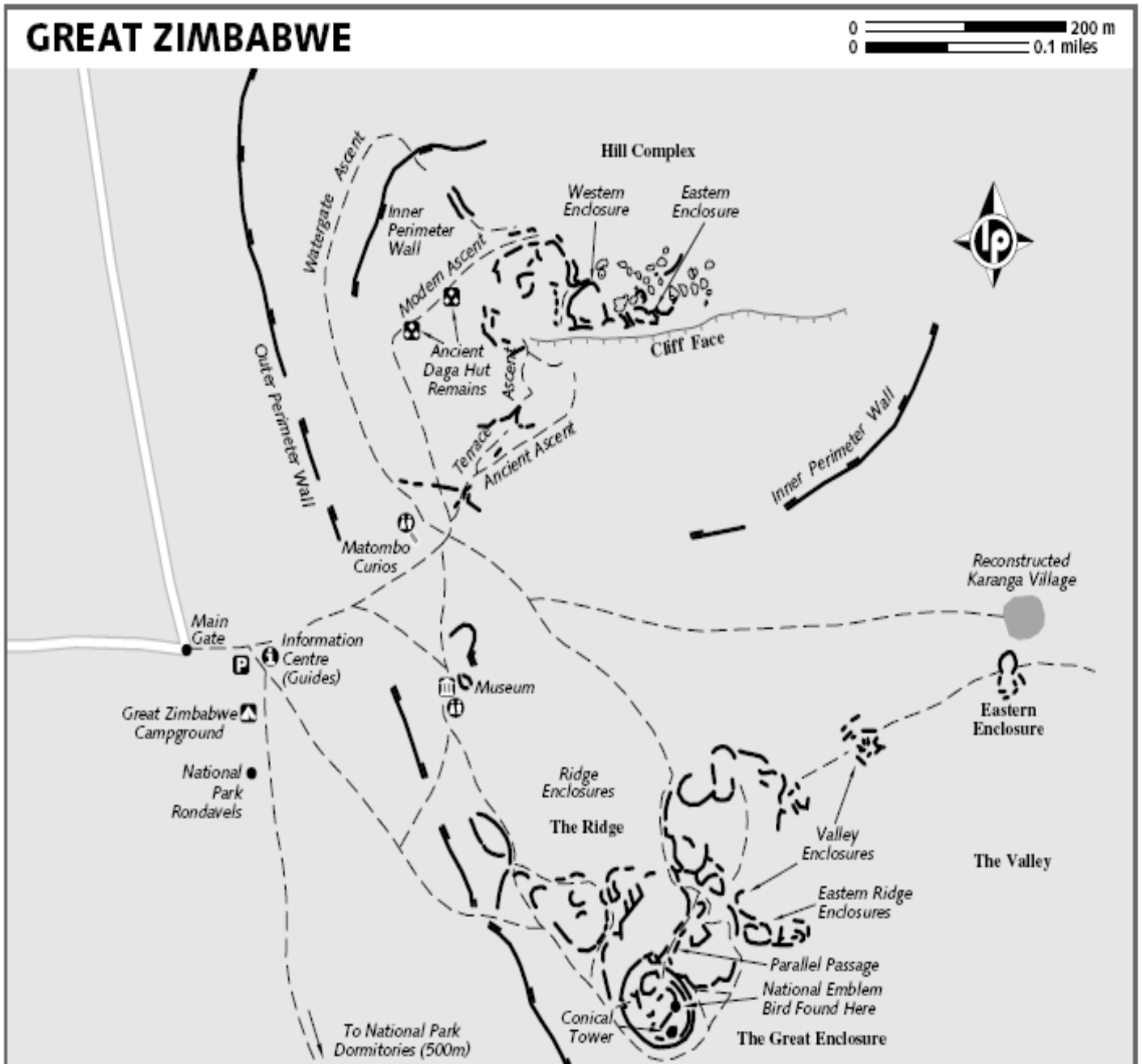
v. **Guide shelter:** A thatched, empty shelter serves as reception for guide services offered by full-time and seasonal guides, often students in archaeology. Visitors to the site are not required to use the services of a guide. Guides are employed by the NMMZ and report to the manager education.

vi. **Conservation Centre:** specialises in the care of dry stonewalls so-called Zimbabwe. The centre is the only one of its kind in the SADC region.



vii. **Staff Accommodation:** Located between the reception and the gate with the Great Zimbabwe Hotel.

4. **Cultural village:** Set on a smooth, rocky outcrop, a cultural village is under construction comprising of some eight Karanga structures to be operated as a community-based enterprise for the benefit of the neighbouring community. The site is exposed to wind, rain and sun, with no natural shade/shelter able to accommodate group visits and no ablution facilities exist. No business plan is in place at present but the construction forms a 'special project' in NMMZ's strategy.



## 2.3 Institutional arrangements

The monument at Great Zimbabwe is administrated by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ). It is the country's heritage organisation established under an Act of Parliament; The National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia Act (1972) which is now called the National Museums and Monuments Act (Chapter 25:11). NMMZ is a parastatal, funded through a grant from government and accountable to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Act established a Board of Trustees to provide "for the establishment and administration of museums" and **"to provide for the preservation of ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of historical or scientific value or interest"**.

Management is undertaken by the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director who report to the Board of Trustees. Management at the national administrative headquarters are tasked with finance, audit, security, public relations, human resources and research & development.

Zimbabwe's National Monuments list was first created in 1936. To date there are 137 sites in the register. The register is a prime list of places that embody the history of Zimbabwe embracing key aspects of heritage such as religion, language, culture, buildings, human conflicts and human actions on the environment. The list also includes places of outstanding natural beauty. A number of monuments are considered sacred by the indigenous populations of Zimbabwe. Religious ceremonies were held at the sites as well as ceremonies for cleansing and healing. Rainmaking ceremonies were performed before the onset of the rains, and thanksgiving after harvest in May. Great Zimbabwe is one of these sacred sites.

The National Monuments list as presently constituted is dominated by monuments of the Rhodesian period. This is surprising given that this country has at least 3000 years of occupation history. Most sites were listed by the Rhodesian government, with only eight sites having been listed after the attainment of independence in 1980. Zimbabwe Ruins' sites constitute 26 of all 137 proclaimed sites (19%).

NMMZ has recently appointed a curatorial staff member to work on the portfolio of documenting the country's historic buildings. The documentation of historic buildings in Harare is nearing completion and there are plans to revisit the legislation so that these buildings are afforded greater protection. The new Strategic Plans includes the creation or re-activation of Historic Buildings Advisory Committees in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and Masvingo.

### Tourism

The development, control and promotion of tourism is the responsibility of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism & Hospitality Industry. Registration and grading of accommodation facilities are one of those tasks where a direct overlap with the NMMZ as operators at Great Zimbabwe occurs.

More importantly, the ZTA is responsible for promoting the country as a tourism destination and for that, it is highly dependent on quality attractions with international drawing power like Great Zimbabwe.

The NMMZ does not have clear mandate for tourism anchored in its own founding documents. Even the provision of cost and profit centres is only recently being discussed which is understandable in the context of the economic situation in the country. The NMMZ is however in many ways a high employer in the tourism industry. Although its objectives are primarily in the field of conservation and curation, the majority of staff members are involved in functions that support visitor use of the site (see organigram Great Zimbabwe).

To date, no income from entrance fees at Great Zimbabwe is linked to the promotional (or operational) budget of the ZTA. The ZTA introduced a 2% tourism levy on all services but the practical implementation of this is currently unclear. It is also not clear if this applies to the government operated sites and enterprises and therefore if it effectively applies to Great Zimbabwe.

The Tourism Authority is actively engaging in a new marketing strategy based on a “world of wonders” and is developing plans to introduce the development of “heritage tourism” around identified cultural landscapes.

**The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority** is a statutory body under the Ministry of Tourism & Hospitality Industry. The authority has four divisions [1] destination marketing [2] industry development, [3] investment promotion & product development and [4] administration and finance. The authority does not control any tourism assets. National monuments and museums rest with the NMMZ and national parks and other protected areas fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment. The ZTA has four regional representations across the country.

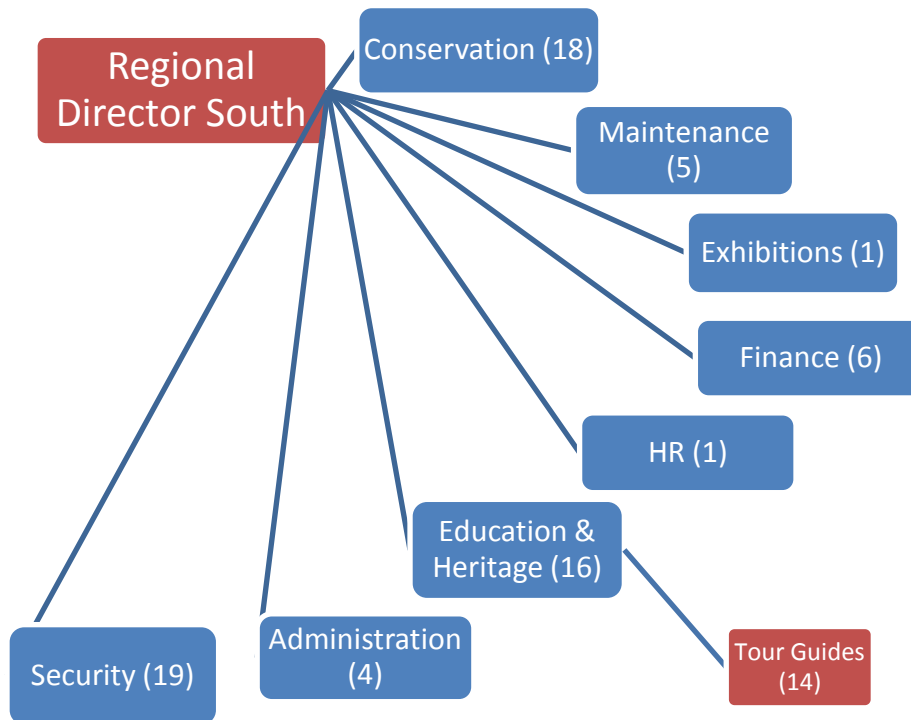
## 2.4 Site Management

A decentralised representation of five regional managers ensures a strong link to proclaimed sites and stakeholders in the country. This division does not adhere to the administrative government regions but has been selected to ensure geographical control over assets and sites.

The world heritage site at Great Zimbabwe falls within the Southern Region, covering the administrative provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South. The regional management for the Southern region is based at Great Zimbabwe and also responsible for following sites:

- Rock art sites at Chamavara (paintings) and Dengeni Cave
- Dry stone wall ruins at Majiri, Chibvumani and Musimbira
- Italian Chapel, a historic building constructed during WWII close to Masvingo.
- Curfew and Bell Towers of the fortified structure at Victoria situated in the town of Masvingo.

Management is structured in several sections headed by a manager. Numbers in brackets indicate staff numbers for each section:



The main management activities are found at the Great Zimbabwe monument. This is due to the size of the site, the conservation requirements, the scope of the built infrastructure, the relationship with neighbouring stakeholders and visitor numbers.

Visitor access to the monument at Great Zimbabwe is controlled by the NMMZ through the provision of by-laws for which the board is empowered under the National Museums and Monuments Act (sec. 41).

The organisation structure is dominated by conservation/control costs centres aimed at maintaining what is there. Especially the visitor/hospitality function is not well represented which must be regarded as a shortcoming for a (in the past, and potentially) highly visited world heritage site.

Through a process of consultation NMMZ has drawn up a strategic plan 2005 – 2008 which has been extended to include 2009. The strategic plan has seven core objectives and a range of activities allocated to them of which some directly affect Great Zimbabwe:

KEY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2009
NMMZ will continue to make its collections and monuments and the knowledge in them accessible to a wide diversity of audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility study of Licensing of Tour Guides.</li> </ul>
NMMZ will ensure that it manages and develops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management Plan for Great Zimbabwe ready.</li> </ul>

all monuments entrusted to its care as world class tourist destinations for the benefit of Zimbabwe and the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoU on co-management of Victoria Falls.</li> </ul>
NMMZ will promote a highly motivated workforce in an environment that develops individual potential and effective organisational management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training workshop for Tour Guides.</li> <li>• Review of existing policies with recommendations.</li> <li>• Improved salary packages and incentives for all staff.</li> </ul>
NMMZ must develop its funding base through effective marketing and good business practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business plan for NMMZ.</li> <li>• Standard signage at World Heritage Sites, Provincial Heroes Acres, Class 1 NM and other selected sites.</li> <li>• Competitive pricing system for products and services.</li> </ul>
NMMZ will ensure the good management of all capital and special projects.	<p><u>Capital projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of Great Zimbabwe cooking facilities for camp site, rondavels and dormitories and renovation of staff accommodation by 30 November 2009.</li> </ul> <p><u>Special projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Zimbabwe new traditional village completed. 31 March 2009</li> </ul>

In its endeavour to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan, a national management programme has been drafted which is de-centralised to regional offices and endeavours to engage the various stakeholders with special emphasis to involve local communities. In August 2009, some activities were started but none have been completed.

The economic challenges in Zimbabwe over the past years have created a large discrepancy between objectives of this strategy, annual work plans and practical actions and achievements on the ground. Whereas Great Zimbabwe formed a cash-cow for the NMMZ in the past, the last few years have seen a total collapse in 2008 due to the political and economic situation. Domestic tourism has been severely influenced by extreme levels of inflation and limited supplies of basic goods. The well known and frequently visited monument at Great Zimbabwe has seen a decline in visitor numbers from over 120,000 people in 1996 to slightly over 20,000 in 2006 and a mere 15,442 in 2008 constituting a decline by nearly 90%.

Early 2009 has seen some form of recovery. The introduction of the US dollar as currency has ensured a stable price level, stock levels in shops rising and has made it possible for both producers and consumers of tourism to plan production. Although this means that there are signs of improvement and an increase in visitor numbers, the industry is still faced with occupancy levels that don't support the capitalisation. Many enterprises have (partly) closed down and/or have sent staff on un-paid leave.

The salary costs alone at Great Zimbabwe amount to US\$ 9000 per month as of July 2009 which would require some 600 foreign visitors to off-set salaries alone where current numbers don't surpass 150. NMMZ has been allocated a total (nationwide) budget of US\$ 400,000 but cash flow limitations have resulted in only US\$ 30,000 being dispersed by treasury to date.

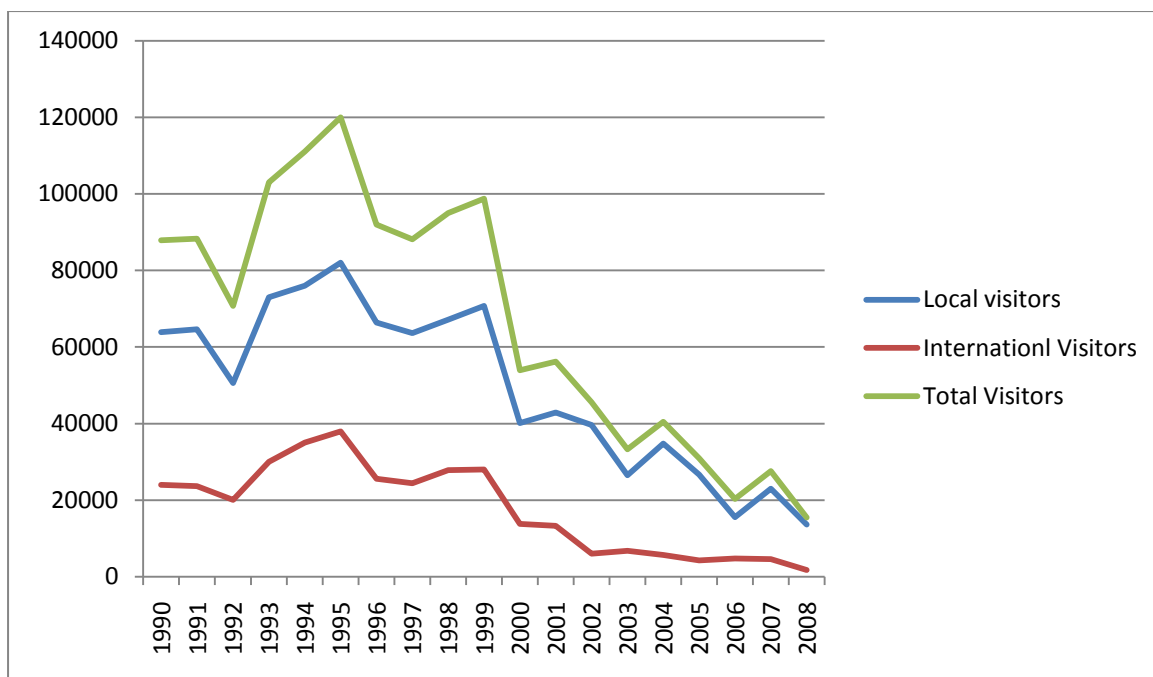


Figure 3 Visitor trends at Great Zimbabwe

Coupled with challenging and sporadic budget support from government and surreal inflation levels, makes the effort and commitment of the regional (and national) staff, and the current physical state of the site, highly remarkable achievement.

## 2.4 Stakeholder relations

The stakeholders at Great Zimbabwe can be divided into three categories: private sector, government and communities. There are three recognised traditional authorities that make up the community around the monument area: Chief Charumbira (Shumba-Charumbira) who is also President of the Chief's Council, Chief Mugabe (Moyo-Duma) and Headman Nemanwa (under Chief Charumbira). The private sector consists of several neighbouring accommodation establishments and tour operators based at Masvingo. Government stakeholders include the regional government administrated out of Masvingo, the town council's Publicity Association (with a general economic promotion mandate, not just tourism) as well as the national parks authority with whom NMMZ share offices.

### Community relations:

It is estimated that the size of 'the community' living around Great Zimbabwe is some 20,000 people. There is no formalised and structured relationship between the monument site, regarded as highly sacred to surrounding communities, and the traditional authority. There are usually two community meetings per year but these seem to be courtesy meetings rather than structured co-management efforts although issues of fire control are being discussed.

Visitor entry by local communities for religious and traditional activities is unofficial, but tolerated by management. During consultations with neighbouring communities in August 2009, the wish for better cooperation was expressed. The community feels that the site was taken away from them and that access to grave sites for religious purposes is complicated. They also do not see/know where the money goes that visitors pay for entrance and request traditional leadership involvement in management issues around the site.

The community also states that communication was better in the past and that the traditional authority was better informed about development and that this break-down in communication has influenced the visitor numbers to Great Zimbabwe. It is felt that no benefits from the site occur for the local people and there is a general consensus that a “local management board” is needed. This body will deal with access issues, fire control, enhancing the spiritual state of the site, tourism development in the larger area (including cultural performances), access for ceremonies, etc.

Craft sales take place at the entrance to the Great Zimbabwe Hotel which is by local community members although actual items for sale can be sourced elsewhere.

#### **Private sector:**

The private sector around Great Zimbabwe consists of accommodation establishments (that also include excursions to the site) and some tour operators/travel agents based in Masvingo. The Hotel Great Zimbabwe (owned and operated by the African Sun Group) is located within the boundaries of the proclaimed site, is additionally fenced but has its own access gate.

Private sector operators have no special status when entering the site. Guides of neighbouring lodges will normally not use the services of a NMMZ guide when taking visitors to the site.

The accommodation facilities offered by the NMMZ are not perceived as competition. The quality of the units does not meet that of the private sector operators in the area. The industry



4 Lodge at the Ancient City

does express the wish for events to be organised at the site but knows that the current status of tourism in the area (country) does not allow for that. The industry regards the current entrance fee, especially the foreign visitor fee of US\$ 15 per person as high.

The private sector generally is barely surviving. Majority of staff is at home on unpaid leave and facilities are practically dormant, running on skeleton (care-taker) staff although signs are that interest is coming back now that both individual travellers from South Africa and

companies are able to plan itineraries due to the introduction of a stable cash currency.

At full operation, the Great Zimbabwe area offers some 120 beds to visitors, excluding the facilities of the NMMZ on site.

**Local government:**

A Masvingo Municipal economic development office exists which has a mandate for tourism as part of local economic development.



### **3. Opportunities for Enhancing Monument Value**

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The role of Great Zimbabwe Monument Site in creating interest in the country, the community dynamics around the site and the interest/strategy of the NMMZ in enhancing sites under their custodianship, creates opportunities for enhanced value that can be beneficial for other world heritage sites in Africa.

Tourism development in many African countries starts around protected sites and parks. A protected status says something about scarcity – if the resource is available everywhere (there where the potential visitor lives) it would not be worth the effort to travel abroad. This principle is behind both official government controlled sites and reserves as well as community and privately controlled areas' entry in to the market of ecotourism.

The protection of such resources is expensive. To sustain the heritage, a comprehensive view of costs and benefits needs to be made: covering the full range of protecting costs, ensuring that those who bear protected resources costs are recognised and adequately compensated, and that those who benefit make a fair contribution to their maintenance.

In many cases, the protected status subscribed by government is passive, offering nothing more than the proclaimed status. At government controlled resources, including many proclaimed heritage sites, where priority rests with conservation as an objective of state, this often creates the expectation of “free for the public” based on the perception of a public asset. The situation is the same at Great Zimbabwe. The act that created the NMMZ states its objective as: “to provide for the **preservation** of ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of historical or scientific value or interest”.

The emphasis on controlled government preservation reflects itself in the organisation structure of the NMMZ as well as its relationship with stakeholders around (in this case) Great Zimbabwe. The organigram does not make provision for business/tourism as primary objectives and structured interaction around clearly defined roles and responsibilities with neighbouring stakeholders does not exist.

As Great Zimbabwe is an iconic site in so many ways, not the least as it has given its name to the nation; there is a lot of potential to enhance its utilisation and management. Following options may be considered:

#### **A. Management structure:**

##### **i. NMMZ**

Arguably, almost half the staff number at Great Zimbabwe (guides, some maintenance and security) is directly related to tourism services (day and overnight visitors). This forms a huge costs centre, not only in staff salaries, but also through the provision of staff accommodation. The organisation structure on site and within the national set-up of NMMZ does not work with costs and profit centres related to these hospitality tasks and no internal hospitality

responsibility exists as the organigram doesn't identify such a position. This makes it difficult to offer and adapt a market-related product.

The identified strategic task of introducing market related pricing mechanisms should be used to initiate broader thinking around the hospitality function of NMMZ. In this context, consideration can be given to possible outsourcing of such activities to private sector operators on a lease basis as the current act makes no clear provision of transfer of state assets within proclaimed national monuments.

## ii. Cooperative management

The creation of a cooperative management structure should be considered. This is very much in line with the Joint Management Committee thinking of UNESCO in which various site stakeholders meet regular in a

formal structured manner to discuss relevant issues.



5 Too many functions for NMMZ

It should ideally not be seen as a 'cost' to be covered by NMMZ's site management but much more as a platform to enhance the value, and reduce costs of conserving a world heritage site. The **Great Zimbabwe Stakeholder Committee** could, for example, consist of NMMZ Regional Director and Head of Maintenance (grounds, water, fences and fire control), representatives of the three traditional authorities, local economic development officer of Masvingo, 2 representatives of the private sector tourism organisation and the manager of the Great Zimbabwe Hotel (because of its unique position at the site). Issues to be addressed could include: access, special events, fire management, grazing, rates, service, information, statistics, tariffs, local economic development etc.

An improved cooperation with the neighbouring community is important for both parties. The cultural value of the site towards its neighbours is currently largely intangible: it has historical and spiritual significance, but little economic value in the sense of generating income to communities. The strong link of the site to current community practices it also potentially of interest to visitors. It brings an attraction, perceived as a monument of ancient people, in to modern day Zimbabwe as to date, the site is used for rituals, gatherings and religious activities that form very much part of the livelihood of (rural) people and may be of interest to many foreign visitors. Finding ways of exploiting this community relationship with the site to the benefit of the community and tourists represents an opportunity. This could involve visitors meetings and/ or interacting with community members to better understand the relevance of the site, the kind of rituals and their purpose, and so on.

### iii. Community Development Trust

In addition to a cooperative management committee structure, the NMMZ could explore setting up a Community Development trust of fund, which it appoints trustees too along with representatives of traditional structures in the area. This trust could develop a plan to highlight and prioritise socio-economic projects to address community needs. It could derive an income from a number of sources, all of which would need to be considered in more detail in a separate project scoping process, to possibly include:

- An apportionment of visitor fees once the site becomes operationally profitable
- Donors
- Tourism businesses in the area who in time, once conditions improve, may look for a suitable vehicle for Corporate Social Investment.

The NMM act makes provision for such Local Committees (II:18) but it is not clear if an apportionment of visitor fees is currently catered for under the Act.

## **B. Access:**

### i. Industry access

Understanding the strong relationship between the private sector enterprises around Great Zimbabwe and Lake Mutirikwe in trying to put the area back on the map as a tourism destination, a provision for free access by full-time employees of registered enterprises and members of the tourism association should be considered. This could be managed as an incentive to members of a local tourism association, in order to create some momentum around creating such an effective body, with benefits.

### ii. Community access

The proposed cooperative management committee would need to formally design the approach towards community access (free of charge). This is already happening, but could benefit from formalisation and clear communication to all groups. This approach should include which community groups can access, what sites to visit, what activities/rituals to perform, code of conduct during such activities and how many people can be part of a single event. The nature of community 'use' of the area will not allow for an exact projection of days/dates but the creation of a structure forms an excellent opportunity to discuss roles and responsibilities and create awareness around the effects of uncontrolled community access. The proposed GZ stakeholder committee should be tasked with formulating the structure.

## **C. Products & Services**

### i. Guiding

In stimulating visible and tangible benefits for community members, and to instigate entrepreneurial spirit in the larger community, the concept of a Local Guides Association as separate business entity could be investigated. Good examples exist in the SADC region whereby guides work under an agreement (with the NMMZ) that describes roles,

responsibilities and a code of conduct and will ensure continued presence of a guide during operating hours.

At Great Zimbabwe, the entrance fee structure is currently already separate from the guides and guide services will be packaged and prices published. The guides will have their own business plan, approved by the site director, and individual income will increase as a percentage of the guiding price based on experience and skills level of the individual guide which serves as an incentive to enhance their own performance level. The strategy of the NMMZ identified guiding/training as a priority area for support which creates a good opportunity for the (pilot) initiative.

## ii. Accommodation

The fixed accommodation units need to be upgraded to meet international standards. With perfect location at the monument site, they form a potential cash cow as regional demand for basic self-catering accommodation is high.



6. Outsourced together with camp site

NMMZ could consider the creation of a dedicated division to oversee these facilities and recruit appropriate skills to run tourist facilities as part of the current process of developing a strategic projects division to look at commercial activities. The critical issues at the moment as it pertains to visitor accommodation is to ensure that the accommodation facilities are well maintained and upgraded in several instances and that

appropriate marketing and management of these facilities takes place.

In the current situation of budgetary constraints, the concept of outsourcing the facilities as separate entities on a lease agreement may be considered. The head-lease might be awarded to the neighbouring community who can sub-lease the facility to a reputable and qualified entrepreneur. Such a structure would enable direct benefits from the site for the community and encourage their commitment to conserving the site.

The camp site and rondavels with shared ablution should be a single entity catering for the lower end of the market. The larger double bedroom units and luxury (purpose built) units should become a mid-market self catering product.

The dormitory units should remain under the control of the NMMZ as it fits in the educational objectives of the organisation and don't incur high maintenance costs but require urgent upgrading as identified in the strategic plan.

## D. Others:

### i. Traditional Village (& crafts)

The traditional village, currently under construction, requires some careful considerations in order to succeed as a business. The high degree of individual visitors to the site, all coming at random times and with varying lengths of stay, makes it difficult to produce a meaningful interpretative performance. The current visitor numbers will also not justify a permanent presence of community members on site. The site, away from the natural flow of visitors through the ruins also doesn't help to attract visitors.

There is scope to conceptualise a concept whereby the traditional village, craft market (currently found at the Great Zimbabwe Hotel entrance) and souvenir shop are combined into one development that also is able to provide a **communal lounge** function for day-visitors as overnight visitors at one of the self-catering units/campsite. This will be a place where visitors can relax, interact and enjoy a beverage or snack.

The current structures housing the souvenir shop, opposite the museum, could form the core facility near which a "traditional village" is to be erected where performances can take place at set times for a small fee. Craft items and artefacts should be sold here (see below).

Once the performances are structures, publicised and known to the industry in the area, support could grow and additional performances organised (on request). Once a month, or at full-moon, night access should be allowed to allow visitors the change to enjoy a truly unique experience. Surcharges may apply which needs to be discussed and organised in corporation with the private sector (for proposed local association members only).

### ii. Craft production and sales

The current sales outlets along the main road should be integrated in style and management concept of the traditional village. The items will be subject to a joint committee approval on quality and type of craft so as not to copy other cultures. A unique collection of craft items is to be developed and sold and the quality of crafts and pricing will be done by the producers themselves. Within the region there are several systems for the grading and pricing of crafts which will create additional skills and understanding of pricing principles with the craft producers. The ZTA has staff committed to craft development who could be involved in this as well as the creation of an authentic "Great Zim Craft" brand.

An official, professional booklet of Great Zimbabwe should be produced that includes not only scientific facts of the site, but profiles (individual) community members and their use, perception, values of the site which will enhance the relationship of communities with the site whilst promoting it to visitors.

## 4. Recommendations

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As custodian of iconic attractions like Victoria Falls and Great Zimbabwe, the NMMZ is a potentially very important organisation in the re-start of tourism in the country. The quality of the visitor experience (in the context of this study, particularly that at Great Zimbabwe) as well as the management structure at such sites forms an essential element in shaping sustainable heritage utilisation that adheres to best practices, international heritage management trends and creates benefit for ordinary Zimbabweans.

The excellent work conducted by the NMMZ under difficult circumstances must be highly praised and has created a platform from which an innovative model for sustainable, shared resource utilisation can be created.

It is recommended that partners of Great Zimbabwe seek to:

- Assess the identified options for enhancing the value of the site in the context of NMMZ strategy and organisational objectives (NMMZ & AWHF);
- Adapt (or develop and implement) a management system based on the current opportunities and challenges in the sustainable utilisation of cultural heritage sites (NMMZ);
- Build long-term, formal relationships with the local community towards collaborative management that stimulate sustainable economic and social development;
- Develop educational and cultural programmes that will make the public understand and appreciate the value of this national heritage (NMMZ & ZTA) ;
- In close cooperation with the ZTA, Great Zimbabwe should become the topic of a marketing campaign (*Great Zimbabwe* forms a slogan in its own right) to properly promote the site to both local and international markets(ZTA);
- Take advantage of development opportunities associated with the Cultural Landscape (initiate pilot projects in collaboration with NMMZ , ZTA and AWHF) for which proposals should be developed;
- Encourage partnership initiatives and collaboration with the stakeholders and local and international organizations that are likely to provide material and technical assistance (NMMZ & ZTA).