



**CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT**

**Arid Areas Programme**

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## **THE CREATION OF THE KAROO DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION TRUST**



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## 1. Introduction

The Great Karoo is a vast arid region located in the centre of the country, which can be defined as including Namaqualand, the Succulent Karoo, Bushmanland, the Little Karoo, Richtersveld and the Nama Karoo. This region is generally underdeveloped, particularly lacking in manufacturing. The economy is dependent on extensive farming, which has shed a great deal of labour during the last twenty years. At the same time, many of the Karoo towns have shown some developmental potential, in terms of tourism and crafts.

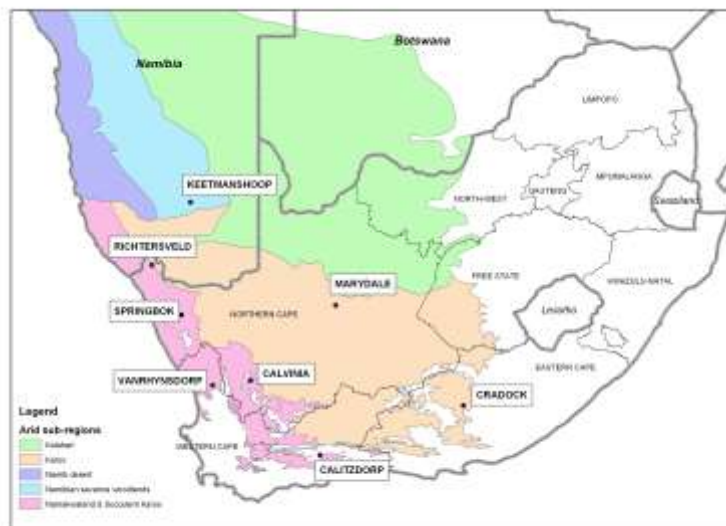
The project to create a Karoo Development Foundation is part of the Arid Areas Programme, which examines the economic potential of the Greater Karoo, so that it can influence future government planning and expenditures. This is a new endeavour, as there has never been a coherent attempt to investigate the economic potential of the Karoo. The purpose of this project was to motivate for the creation of a development institution to represent and promote the interests of the Karoo.

As an important part of the process, a consultative exercise was conducted. A series of meetings was held with a wide range of stakeholders, to discuss the structure and purpose of such an institution. In the process, the idea of a Karoo Development Foundation took shape.

## 2. The developmental challenge in the Karoo

Because of low rainfall and associated low productivity, the arid areas are sparsely populated, and in some areas, the population density is less than 1 or 2 person per km<sup>2</sup>. This has contributed to their political insignificance of the region, as the various provincial and national governments have invariably given more attention to their more populous regions.

**Map 1: The Karoo, Kalahari and Namaqualand**



In the Karoo, the economy has been largely based on extensive sheep and goat farming. During the last fifty years, extensive stock farms have been consolidated, and due to the economic climate, they have shed a great deal of labour. Many of these unemployed farm workers have drifted to the towns, to join the ranks of the urban unemployed. The recent advent of game

farming has contributed to this trend of human displacement, although opportunities in agri-tourism and eco-tourism have created scope for new and more sophisticated types of employment.

Most of the Karoo towns have grown in size, due to in-migration, and because of the South African social grant system (which encourages people to stay where they are). But the urban economy of the arid areas is very fragile. Typically, the business sector is small, and there is virtually no industrial base. There is an incipient informal sector in most towns, often linked to pension pay-out days.

Although the Karoo towns are fairly well provided with infrastructure, there are worrying aspects of its socio-economic profile. Poverty levels are high, due to high levels of unemployment, and increasing rates of illness (HIV/AIDS and TB). A large proportion of income is derived from social grants, with social consequences that are not fully understood. Large housing schemes and the availability of social grants have attracted many migrants to the small towns. The local economies of small towns are characterised by weak multipliers, because a great deal of purchasing power is spent in the larger centres, or metropolitan areas situated outside these areas. The influx of migrants from the farms to the towns, and the migration from the more densely populated areas in the Eastern Cape towards the Karoo, are creating immense pressures on the existing infrastructure. There is an out-migration of skilled people, due to a lack of local economic opportunities.

Nevertheless, the arid areas have important natural, economic and social assets. Natural assets include spectacular scenery, wide open spaces, spectacular spring flower displays and a diversity of unusual plants and animals. The region is also rich in minerals including titanium and diamonds on the west coast and uranium in the central Karoo. Infrastructure in the towns is generally good, and represents a great deal of sunk capital in housing, water, sanitation, roads and other infrastructure. The game industry is becoming an important foreign exchange earner in the area. Agricultural expertise is high, with skilled and experienced commercial farmers, who are often eager to become involved in land reform, agricultural support and other initiatives. Social services are generally good, and include clinics, schools, banks, post offices and retail facilities. Some of the towns have developed significant tourism potential, with niche attractions and activities. There is also a growing phenomenon of "reverse migration", whereby middle class city dwellers are moving to the rural areas, and this brings in new sources of capital, expertise and developmental initiative. There are growing numbers of black and coloured "emergent farmers" on the municipal commonages, who represent a nucleus of new commercial farmers in the future.

The Karoo faces a major developmental hurdle: It straddles four provinces. These are the Western Cape, the Northern Cape, the Eastern Cape, and the Free State Province. In each of the four provinces, it is the neglected zone, and development effort is diverted away, towards the coastlines and the capital cities.

This has major developmental consequences. In terms of the National Government's *National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP)*, investment will, in future, be directed to "areas with economic potential". This suggests that areas such as the Karoo, which have hitherto been defined as "areas lacking in economic potential", will continue to be starved of government funding and development effort. We believe that the NSDP will unfortunately become a self-fulfilling prophecy – it will reinforce the process of underdevelopment in backward areas. This will have the unintended consequence of intensifying poverty in these areas, or encouraging out-migration to the cities.



These factors prevent a unified, co-ordinated approach to the development of the Karoo. This highlights the need for an institution which can work with the four provinces which contain Karoo areas (as well as the 8 District Municipalities which are found in the Karoo). Furthermore, such an institution could facilitate exchanges between government, private and civil society organizations. It could also undertake public good activities to benefit the area as a whole, such as registering Karoo brand-names or raising funds for local activities in the Karoo.

### **3. Economic opportunities in the Karoo**

Six Consultative Briefings were held with relevant stakeholders. During these Briefings, two presentations were made, which highlighted the economic potential of the Karoo region.

#### **3.1. New niche industries in the arid areas**

This presentation drew on work done by Doreen Atkinson, Mark Ingle and Sue Taylor. Uniquely Karoo products are based on the provisioning (e.g. natural rangeland), regulating (carbon sequestration), cultural (spiritual, recreational) or supporting (evolution, soil formation) ecosystem services of the region. In addition to the traditional agricultural products (wool, mutton, mohair and ostrich), a range of new niche products are emerging. These include the "biblical fruits" (pomegranates, figs and olives), indigenous plants (hoodia, skeletium and aloe ferox), leather works, hydroponic vegetable production, agave plants (fibre, alcoholic drinks, and medicinal products), essential oils (such as lavender and wild rosemary), aquaculture (fish farming in Karoo dams), and goat's milk products.

In addition, a groundswell of creativity is the hallmark of new craft products in the Karoo. These include wire and glassware (from Jagersfontein), tobacco pipes (from Ladismith), decoupage ostrich eggs (from Aberdeen), and cement statuettes (from Nieu Bethesda).

The tourism industry is growing in the Karoo. A recent survey in the Little Karoo identified open spaces and unspoiled scenery as a major attractant for urban and foreign tourists. This includes eco-tourism (spring flower tours, national parks, private conservation areas and game farms), small-town tourism (based on Victorian Karoo architecture), railway tourism, astro-tourism (star-gazing and telescopes), bicycle riding and hiking, hot-air ballooning, palaeontology, horse shows, the new Richmond booktown, and the most valuable commodity of all – the space, emptiness and solitude which is possible in the Karoo.

Several high-technology projects are being undertaken in the Karoo. This includes SALT (the Southern African Large Telescope) in Sutherland, the SKA (Square Kilometer Array telescope) in Carnarvon, ultralight aircraft manufacture in Somerset East. Projects using ecosystems services include carbon sequestration projects in the southern Karoo. In addition, solar and wind energy generation have massive potential in the Karoo. There are already plans afoot to initiate uranium mining near Beaufort West.

A major new possibility is that of "space tourism", which is due to be initiated by Virgin Galactic in New Mexico in 2009. The South African Karoo offers all the features required of space ports. It is a remote area, far from population centres; it is located at fairly high altitude; it enjoys many sunny, cloudless days; and it provides many other tourism spin-offs (particularly astro-tourism, in the Carnarvon-Williston-Sutherland region). Also, the skies in the Southern Hemisphere are particularly interesting for star-gazers and potential space tourists. Such an investment in a space-port will cost about R2-3 billion, and could be done by a public-private partnership.

### **3.2 Branding the Karoo**

During November 2007, our team joined forces with another research team, based at the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Pretoria. This team was researching the potential of branding, "products of origin" and "geographic indicators" for high-value niche products. The team was led by Prof. Johann Kirsten of the University of Pretoria and Dr Dirk Troskie of the Department of Agriculture of the Western Cape Province. Their project took place in partnership with CIRAD, a French research agency. One of their key themes was the branding of "Karoo lamb" and other animal products of the Karoo rangelands. In our discussions with this team, it became clear that the issue of branding of Karoo products was an important aspect of marketing the Karoo's economy.

The Kirsten/Troskie team had already had several workshops with Karoo lamb producers, and had conducted a sensory taste study of the uniqueness of Karoo lamb (compared to lamb from other parts of the country). Significantly, their research had found that 54% of respondents in a survey conducted in Cape Town and Johannesburg were aware of the product "Karoo lamb", and about a quarter of these respondents were willing to pay more for Karoo lamb. The agricultural team make a strong argument for registering "Karoo lamb" as a Geographic Indicator (GI), which will increase potential revenues for Karoo lamb producers. This, in turn, could be linked to more effective rural development, such as "fair trade" registration. These findings and arguments were presented to the stakeholders at the six consultative briefings.

The need for an institution to manage and promote the "Karoo brand" became very evident during our consultations with stakeholders. Consequently, it is an additional argument for creating a Karoo Development Foundation.

## **4. The creation of the Karoo Development Foundation**

### **4.1 The Consultative Process**

In order to address this problem, this project undertook a consultative process with stakeholders from the four provinces. The following meetings were undertaken:

- (1) *11 March 2008*: A preliminary discussion with key role-players from three provinces (held at the OR Tambo Airport Conference Centre)
- (2) *18 March 2008*: A workshop with municipal and government stakeholders (held at the town of Hanover in the Northern Cape)
- (3) *Seven "Consultative Briefings"* with stakeholders in different parts of the country:
  - Johannesburg: 16 July
  - Philippolis (southern Free State): 21 July
  - Cape Town: 24 July
  - Beaufort West (central Karoo): 25 July
  - Kimberley: 6 August
  - Pretoria: 7 August
  - Graaff-Reinet: 22 August.

The Briefings generally consisted of the following format:

1. A presentation on the activities of the Arid Areas Programme
2. A presentation on the activities of the Karoo Lamb Project

3. A discussion about the economic advantages of the Karoo
4. A discussion of the mission statement and objectives of the proposed Development Foundation
5. A discussion about the proposed Karoo Development Conference and Trade Fair (Graaff-Reinet, 25-27 March 2009).

The meetings generally lasted for two hours, and were attended by a total of 43 people. **(See Appendix for a list of the participants and their institutional affiliations).**

The Consultative Briefings will be held in other localities in future, such as Lake !Xhariep, Cradock, Upington, Calvinia and Graaff-Reinet.

## **4.2 Proposals for the activities of the Karoo Development Foundation**

During the discussions, many suggestions were made about the future of the Karoo Development Foundation:

### *4.2.1 The Modus Operandi of the Karoo Development Foundation*

1. The Foundation should function as an ideas broker and facilitator, and promote linkages between organisations.
2. The Foundation should add value to existing enterprises and organisations.
3. The Foundation should promote international networking, and act as a conduit for international lessons.
4. The Foundation should promote applied research.
5. The Foundation should promote co-operation amongst provinces and districts, for example, on the Lake !Xhariep project, and railway tourism.
6. The Foundation should promote data-gathering and dissemination about the Karoo.
7. The Foundation should promote public awareness of the attributes of the Karoo.
8. The Karoo Foundation should not duplicate activities of government departments, municipalities or other institutions. It should work with them to enhance their impact.
9. The Foundation should research and investigate government funding flows to the Karoo, particularly in the light of the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP).
10. The Foundation should encourage migration of skilled people to the Karoo.
11. The Foundation should assist and promote civil society organisations to achieve their developmental goals.
12. The Foundation should promote regional cohesion, as an input into government regional strategies.
13. The Foundation should host regular economic and social development workshops or conferences.

14. Strategic partnerships should be created with institutions, such as museums, where there are overlapping goals.
15. The Foundation should encourage the inhabitants of the Karoo to be proud of their region. We must say “**This** is the Great Karoo and **this** is the place to be.” For that reason we can say: “**Find yourself** in the Great Karoo” - this is the place to heal your soul. But you cannot sell any product to anyone on earth if you don’t believe in it yourself. So we must make the people proud of the Great Karoo, including the poor people who live in the townships. They must have the pride to say – I am living in a good place. This is the place to be and all I am rather sorry for all the city people who have to struggle around with crime, heavy traffic and grime. The Karoo must be the place to be, the place where you want to be – the place for discerning people.

#### 4.2.2 *Reconciling economic and ecological issues*

1. Natural and ecological preservation need to be recognised as a central purpose of the Foundation. For example, farmers could be encouraged to establish conservancies, and endangered species (such as the riverine rabbit) need to be protected. Sustainable farming and town planning should be encouraged.
2. Palaeontological preservation needs to be a significant focus of the Foundation.
3. The Foundation should promote its developmental objectives without destroying its main asset – the space and tranquillity of the region. The key should be to make the region better, but not to change its nature.

#### 4.2.3 *Promoting economic development and innovation*

1. There is a danger of this initiative being described as a protectionist project. It should do more than protect the heritage of the Karoo. It should also promote innovation.
2. New forms of energy generation need to be promoted – notably solar and wind power.
3. New economic trends need to be researched – for example, the implications of the substitution of sheep farming with game. The economic and ecological shifts from sheep-farming to game farming need to be analysed. The agricultural sector is very concerned about the loss of jobs and food production, and the increase in predators, which has a major impact on the viability of sheep-farming.
4. The Karoo Foundation should promote the registration of Geographical Indicator (GI) names for the Karoo and sub-regions within it. However, a major issue will be the need to define the characteristics and production practices of GI products in such regions. The interests and brand-names of various components of the Karoo (such as the Camdeboo, Noorsveld or Hantam) should be promoted.
5. The issue of branding Karoo products raises the question of whether specific characteristics will be associated with those brands, e.g. fair trade, organic production, or predator-friendly. A further question is how such branding systems will be policed.
6. Producer organisations need to play a key role in the Foundation. Producers’ organisations would need to be motivated to police a GI system, and contribute to funding

through levies on specific products.

7. The Foundation should investigate and promote new transport options, such as the opening of branch railway lines. International partnerships should be created, e.g. with Mexico or India.
8. The Foundation could launch a series of "branded" publications on the Karoo, or a dedicated journal for the Karoo. Such a publication should be housed in the Karoo, with Karoo-based companies. A Karoo media initiative could include videos, books, DVDs and Karoo events. It could also include themed maps of the Karoo. Every little town should have its own poster and map, showing highlights for visitors.
9. The Foundation should conduct research on marketing of local products. It should also promote products of origin, which are of higher value when they are purchased at source. The Foundation should assist with the branding of these products.
10. The Foundation should encourage local businesspeople to join forces and exhibit their products and services at shows, indabas and festivals. The Foundation should organise stalls for the local producers.
11. The Foundation should produce a data-base of donors and potential investors, which could be made available to Karoo producers.
12. The Foundation should promote new "creative class" activities in the Karoo, particularly amongst artists and craftspeople.
13. The Foundation should promote the facilities for tourism, but also the "software", i.e. the network of entrepreneurs to undertake tourism services.
14. The Foundation should promote ambitious new projects, such as space tourism.
15. The Foundation should promote leadership development in the Karoo.
16. The Foundation should be a facilitator and enabler, not an empire builder.
17. The Foundation should mobilise a "Karoo movement", characterised by inclusivity. It should not become rigid and bureaucratic.
18. The Foundation should have a website which serves as a Karoo information hub. This could be done in partnership with existing websites.
19. The Foundation should not become dominated by academics – it must remain as an active *development* organisation.
20. The potential negative impact of investment projects (such as beet production for bio-fuels, and uranium mining) need to be investigated.
21. The Foundation should interact creatively and constructively with foreign investors to maximise their contributions to the development of the Karoo, in particular, assisting underprivileged communities.
22. The Karoo economy should be strongly linked to Fair Trade accreditation.

#### 4.2.4 *Broadening the economic base of the Karoo*

1. The assets of the Karoo need to be used to alleviate poverty.
2. Development should not be top-down or elitist. It should be inclusive of different economic groups. The Foundation should promote exports, such as the export of game venison and crafts.
3. The Foundation should assist and promote small-scale crafters, such as the windmill manufacturers.
4. The Foundation should create and promote learnerships for crafts in the Karoo.
5. The Foundation should promote the development of emergent farmers, on commonage and land redistribution projects.

#### 4.2.5 *Preserving the Karoo heritage*

1. The Foundation should protect the distinctive Karoo architecture, and if necessary, take legal action against people who destroy it.
2. The Foundation should protect the characteristic, iconic features of the Karoo.
3. The Foundation should be able to acquire buildings with unique and indigenous properties, because government bodies have no effective "teeth" to protect such buildings. The acquisition of buildings should not be the main purpose of the Foundation, but as a last resort. The Foundation should focus primarily on protecting intellectual property, such as identifying and registering properties, to give people an incentive to preserve them. The Foundation may wish to design a special logo for historical buildings. The Foundation could also collect and preserve farm diaries.
4. The Foundation should promote education at schools, about the ancient history (100 million years) of the Karoo, including palaeontology and geology. Meteorite impact sites, such as the one in the Jansenville district, need to be protected and promoted as tourism sites. The Karoo also has special and fauna and flora, and more recently, rock art and rock engravings. This could be linked to the training of tour guides. The experiences of successful projects, such as Karoo National Park (Beaufort West), the Kitching Exploration Centre (Nieu Bethesda) and the Samara Nature Reserve (Graaff-Reinet) should be promoted as part of a theme of Karoo ancient history, i.e. a Karoo Fossil and Geology Route ("Discovering Ancient Gondwana"). The Foundation should encourage better brochures, museum displays, school educational materials, teacher training, websites, international geotourism, school science education, fossil heritage conservation, and biodiversity and climate change through deep time.
5. The issue of "Karoo space", stretching across space and time, is an important asset. Many towns do not know the value of their fossil or environmental material. Some towns already have basic collections or valuable sites (such as Prince Albert and Fraserburg) The Foundation should promote municipal museums, for the sake of local education and promoting local tourism.
6. The Foundation should promote the declaration of a World Heritage Site in the Karoo.

7. Township heritage projects should be recognised and promoted.

### **4.3 The revised Mission Statement**

*The revised Mission Statement of the Karoo Development Foundation is the following:*

The Foundation will create a sense of local ownership and pride in the unique and diverse cultural, architectural and natural heritages of the Karoo, will promote regional cohesion in the Karoo, and will promote sustainable socio-economic development in the Karoo.

### **4.4 The Revised Statement of Intent of the KDF is the following:**

1. The Karoo Foundation Trust seeks to create an opportunity for local people to take an active interest in the preservation of their architectural, natural, cultural and archaeological heritage.
2. The Trust shall promote innovative, imaginative and effective economic and social development and investment programmes to enhance the quality of life of residents of the Karoo.
3. The Trust shall promote inclusive and people-centered development strategies, which will promote employment, emergent enterprises, and will alleviate poverty in Karoo communities.
4. The Trust shall endeavour to preserve the ecological heritage of the Karoo.
5. The Trust will facilitate co-operation amongst government, municipal, private and civil society organisations in the Karoo, and assist them to achieve their developmental goals.
6. The Trust shall promote research, publications and exchanges of information and best practice solutions to arid areas problems.
7. The Trust will facilitate international contact and exchanges to promote sustainable development in the arid areas.
8. In endeavouring to achieve the Trust aims and objectives, the Trustees shall always respect the rights and wishes of the people upon whose knowledge and historical background it is drawn.
9. The Trust shall, where necessary, acquire relevant unique and indigenous properties, and/or items to preserve these and the information gleaned from them, for posterity.
10. The Trust shall be pro-active in obtaining and reinforcing moral and financial support for itself. In this regard, the Trustees shall industriously seek the contributions of all the people of South Africa, including the Public and Private sector. Where the support is given, the Trustees shall have an obligation to account for it.

### **4.5 The proposed structure of the Foundation**

The structure of the Foundation will include a small number of Trustees, meeting twice per annum, and a much larger Advisory Board, which will meet once a year. Special meetings of the Board will be arranged as and when necessary. At its future meetings, the Advisory Board members could split into different interest groups (such as crafters, heritage or agriculture), for more specialized discussions. This could evolve into a kind of "Karoo Parliament", possibly combined with a trade festival.

#### **4.6 The way forward**

The findings of the Consultative Briefings, and the revised Mission Statement and Objectives will be circulated to all the participants, for additional inputs. These final changes will be made to the draft Trust Deed. The Trust should be registered with the Registrar of Trusts, by mid-September 2008.

Our next challenge is to organize the Karoo Development Conference and Business Expo, to be held in the Karoo town of Graaff-Reinet, on 25-27 March 2009.

## Appendix : List of participants and other interested parties

	Name	Affiliation	Telephone	E-mail
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