

# Local communities to benefit from KZN game reserve project

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Local communities will benefit from the launch and handover of the R10m Mayibuye Game Reserve Wildlife Economy project by Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs Barbara Thomson in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, on Thursday.

The game reserve is located in the Mkhambathini Local Municipality area, close to land recently awarded to the Ximba family in a restitution claim in terms of a settlement agreement in April 2007.

"A total of 76 job opportunities were created through the project, with 15 field rangers having been trained and employed," said department spokesperson Albi Modise.

"The beneficiary communities will have a 51% shareholding in the company that is rolling out this exciting new development that will be a game changer for land reform in our country."

Modise said a 45km wildlife fence had been erected, a gate house and offices were being built, two houses had been refurbished and turned into the project's offices. Wildlife, including zebra and wildebeest, was also being introduced into the park.

The project has also unlocked a further R100m private investment for the development of an eco-estate.

"While South Africa is the third mega-diverse country, the biodiversity economy (in this case the wildlife and bioprospecting sector) has not reached its full potential in terms of contributing towards livelihoods and the economy of the country as it remains largely unrecognised, underdeveloped and untransformed," said Modise.

"This project is a pioneer in leading this sector to its full potential."