

Big plans for Inanda upgrade

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THE city has come up with a master plan which will unlock the full potential of the beautiful, but neglected, Inanda Dam, as a tourist attraction for local and international visitors.

There will be two hotels, a cultural village, a conference centre, floating restaurants, a yacht club and marina, fractional ownership accommodation, small lodges, and if all goes according to the five-year plan, a cable car that will take tourists from one of the new eco-friendly hotels to the top of the Inanda hill where the Shembe Village is located.

Roads will also be upgraded and more access points established and electricity and sanitation installed.

"It's all very exciting and will create jobs for a lot of people who are now eking out a living," said deputy mayor Logie Naidoo, and chairman of the eThekweni Municipality's economic development committee.

Most of the funding will come from the city, which hopes that the national government, which is keen to develop the rural areas, will also contribute. The cost of some of the major development plans, such as the hotels and ferries, which will take tourists from one end of the dam to the other, will come from the private sector.

About R1 billion in infrastructure and development would be poured into the area, said Naidoo.

"We want work to start as soon as possible," he said, adding that some plans such as water sport facilities

would be up and running in time for the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup, which will see thousands of tourists converge on the Durban area. "This will add to the local bouquet of attractions in the Freedom Valley area which includes the Gandhi Settlement, the Inanda Seminary for Girls and the John Dube House," said Naidoo.

Advertisements calling for interest from potential developers would go out soon, he said.

The five-year master plan has been given the go-ahead by the economic development committee and approved by the city's all-important Exco.

It will now be recommended for formal approval to the outside stakeholders, Umgeni Water and the national Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

A presentation will be given to the traditional leaders in the Inanda area, who are keen to support projects that will benefit the local community.

There are some recreational facilities in the area at the moment, but these are "very limited", said Naidoo.

According to the master plan, the idea is to unlock the potential by upgrading the road from the Umgeni River to the tarred road, plus "several short link roads, and a tourism ring road from the dam to the top of Inanda Hill".

And to increase safety and reduce drownings as a result of children swimming or wading across the Umgeni River, a pedestrian bridge is to be built at the top end of the dam to link the community to the schools on opposite sides of the river.

