

Henley Dam and plantation for sale

SANELISIWE SHAMASE

EVER dreamed of owning a dam?

That dream could become a reality on February 17 next year when Henley Dam and its surrounding plantations come up for public auction on the instructions of Umgeni Water, the owner of the land.

According to a newspaper advert in last week's *Weekend Witness*, the total extent of the land is 476 892 hectares.

The advert states that the property is presently used for timber "and the dam itself is only used for occasional release, which is necessary for flushing the Msunduzi River from time to time".

Shami Harichunder, the corporate stakeholder manager for Umgeni Water, said an independent assessment has placed the value of the land to be auctioned at R14 million.

This is also the market value, said Harichunder.

When asked how much he thinks the land will fetch at the auction, he said: "The principle of buying and selling at market value will apply."

Harichunder said Umgeni Water has owned the

land since 1992 and there are valid reasons behind the decision to place it on public auction.

"It is a business decision that was taken by Umgeni Water as Henley Dam is no longer used for Umgeni Water's core function of water treatment.

The dam is presently used mainly for recreational purposes, and it has also been silted," said Harichunder.

As for the type of developments the land can be used for, Harichunder said it falls outside of the town planning scheme.

The land surrounding the dam is mostly under plantations.

It is not clear what the land would be suitable for at this stage as the town planning scheme does not apply to that particular area.

Whatever use it is put to, maintaining the land will not come cheap.

Harichunder said operating costs of the dam are about R75 000 a month for the 2009/10 financial year, which translates into R900 000 a year.

One of the conditions of sale outlined in the advert states: "From an ecological and environmental perspective, environmental flows must be maintained and any development of the property or dam would require servitudes registered to give access to the dam for release."

