



# TOWARDS GREENER TOURISM



AN INTRODUCTION TO  
THE HERITAGE ENVIRONMENTAL  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME





Only after the last tree has been cut down; Only after the last fish has been caught;  
Only after the last river has been poisoned; Only then will they  
realise that money cannot be eaten..

*Cree Indian Prophecy—1800's*

## An International Perspective

Growing international awareness of environmental issues has posed an interesting challenge to businesses around the world. Globally, third-party recognition and verification of the environmental performance and credentials of tourism products has become the norm and travellers and companies across the world now base their decisions on how well their products of choice meet accepted and recognised standards of environmental stewardship and responsibility.

Africa has been relatively slow in meeting the demands of modern travellers and while tourism arrivals grow on the continent, the lack of independently certified products has been a limiting factor in certain destinations. International certification options have proved too advanced in some regions, while the lack of specific focus on the challenges of Africa have made many initiatives irrelevant.

More focussed and region-specific environmental management programmes have emerged to meet the needs of specific countries and regions, thereby providing a vital competitive environment in which to compete internationally in the field of sustainability and responsible tourism. The Heritage Environmental Rating Programme is one such initiative - the largest and most successful of its kind in Africa, and internationally recognised by the UNWTO and the *World Travel and Tourism Council* (WTTC).

## The Marketing Edge

Internationally, the demand for more responsible and sustainable products and services grows almost daily. What was regarded as a niche market in travel, responsible travel has entered the mainstream of tourism and there is clear evidence that when available, responsible tourism facilities and services appeal to all travellers.

Responsible travellers are looking for ways in which they are able to minimise their impacts on local communities and environments, without giving-up their interests, expectations or convenience. Travellers from the United States and Europe have become more interested in what their suppliers and service providers do to ensure the fair and equitable economic distribution of their 'spend' and certified businesses are being regarded as their first-line of purchase in almost all cases.

In a study conducted by *Tourism Concern*, a respected British NGO on sustainable travel, almost 96% of outbound UK travellers indicated that they would prefer to stay in environmentally responsible resorts than in a 5-star property. European consumer research conducted in 2006 reflected a willingness by travellers from the EU to spend as much as 10% to 15% supplement in establishments that have been certified as environmentally responsible or 'green'. Clearly, these studies (and others) reflect that the market places a high value on environmental performance and responsible social practice.

## Going Green as a Strategic Tool

**T**he King III Report on Corporate Governance is recognised internationally as the benchmark for responsible business practice and corporate governance. In the United States – rocked recently by corporate scandals and financial collapses, the practice of reporting the annual performance of business now includes the financial position, the ecological/environmental position and the social position of companies as a standard

The African Continent is enjoying a renaissance in international exposure and the field of environmental verification is untouched at this time. By being independently verified as 'Green', member businesses are setting the standard against which their competitors will be measured in future.

The media love a good story and environmental irresponsibility makes good reading. By committing to a greener approach to your business, the reputation and good name that you have developed over many years can be protected and enhanced.

By establishing sustainable community structures, developmental programmes and sound economic networks at local level, environmentally aware businesses are streets ahead of their nearest rivals as appropriate legislation is developed in an effort to manage global environmental problems.

## Introducing Heritage

**T**he Heritage Environmental Certification Programme has been developed to provide operators of all types of tourism-based businesses an effective environmental management system (EMS) designed to reduce and limit the impact that their operations have on their environment. Heritage incorporates the standards of seven international programmes in a three-tiered approach to sustainable and responsible operations.

Heritage represents Africa's first internationally recognised eco-labelling option and businesses choose to associate with the brand in order to demonstrate their environmental commitment. The programme is based largely on the Swan Eco-Label in Scandinavia, Green Globe Agenda 21, IHEI and ISO 14001 and many of the standards developed for the commercial sector have been incorporated into the Heritage initiative to ensure international compatibility.

Heritage offers an opportunity for tourism-based businesses to change the way in which they interact with their environment—both natural and community, with a practical, hands-on approach to resource management that delivers financial returns while at the same time, positioning your business internationally as 'environmentally responsible'.



One of the most difficult things is not to change society,  
but to change yourself

*Nelson Mandela*



The people who will succeed fifteen years from now, the countries which will succeed, are those which are most based on a sustainable vision of the world.  
That is what we should be training people to do

*Charles Clarke*

## Incremental Recognition

**W**e realise that a large percentage of businesses in Southern Africa fail to meet even the most basic standard of environmental responsibility, but there is a strong willingness by most operators to improve their situation over a period of time.

The Heritage programme offers an incremental approach to responsible business practice by recognising the efforts of individual operators on three levels. Businesses that begin with the Heritage programme - and that meet the entry-level standards of the programme, are awarded the **Heritage Silver Classification** in recognition for their efforts and commitment to changing the way in which they conduct their business activities.

Progressing from this point, the business can further enhance and develop its environmental programme by advancing to the next level of recognition – the **Heritage Gold Classification** which recognises those businesses that have complied with a higher standard of environmental awareness and commitment.

Ultimately, those that aim to reach truly world class standards of environmental awareness and management systems – and who have been independently assessed against a pre-agreed set of criteria, qualify for the highest level of recognition – the **Heritage Platinum Classification**. At this level of environmental performance, the business exceeds even ISO 14000 certification standards, thereby demonstrating exceptional environmental responsibility and an unwavering commitment to sustainable development.

## The Benefits of Heritage

**T**he benefits of membership of any environmental management programme are twofold. Firstly, businesses that operate along sound environmental guidelines and that have committed themselves to sustainable operating procedures enjoy significantly higher exposure in the international arena. The growing international demand for responsible business practice has ensured those businesses that have been independently assessed against recognised environmental standards and criteria receive first consideration when business is conducted.

In addition to this, the following should be considered as beneficial for any business that embarks on a 'green' way of operating:-

- Public relations benefits from protecting your environment attract new clients to your business.
- Attracting support from an increasingly affluent environmental market from around the world;
- The return rate of ecologically aware clients increases proportionately to other business sources;

Each client that supports your business – and experiences the environmental successes that you have achieved, becomes a valuable marketing opportunity without the need to spend additional marketing revenue.

The second, and possibly most important benefit is the savings that can be realised through considerate and well-managed use of resources translate into very real rewards. By reducing the use of water and energy - and through the reduction of waste generated by your business, you will see immediate financial gains through this programme.

In our experience – and based on the existing models that we have established with other members of this programme, the actual savings achieved will depend on the extent to which internal management systems are applied and managed. We are confident that with consideration of the recommendations that are made by Heritage, you will experience the benefits associated with more responsible business practice. Additional benefits provided by the Heritage Programme include:

- Full support and assistance throughout the programme
- Development of an environmental management policies and procedures
- Access to a national network of suppliers, service providers and experts in the field of environmental and sustainable management.
- Membership plaque and Certificate of Compliance.
- Comprehensive assessment report and recommendations for improvement.
- Comprehensive Environmental Manual
- Human Resource development assistance

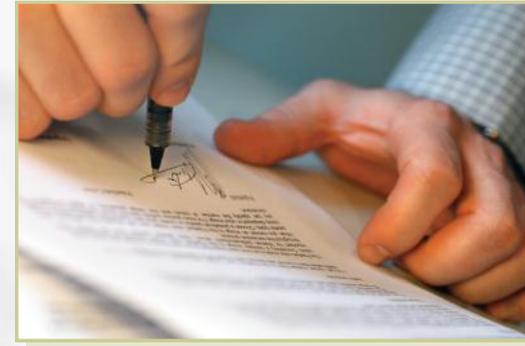
Environmental management has become the way of the future and whether your decision to participate is based on the marketing or on the cost-savings benefits, the long-term benefits that you will achieve for your business, your community and ultimately, your children, makes your positive decision all the more worthwhile.

## The Cost of Greening your Business

**T**he cost of any environmental management initiative or eco-rating programme is often the most misunderstood aspect of going 'green'. Because many of the benefits accrued through responsible business practice are intangible, it is often difficult to justify the participation and licence fees associated with most initiatives.

However, the Heritage Programme has been developed to ensure that at minimal cost, members achieve a good return on investment – and it is an investment after all. Our licence fees are highly competitive and tailor-made to reflect the individual needs of each business, while corporate and group discounts are provided for those organisations that operate multiple sites.

Each participating property or unit is licensed, assessed and supported independently irrespective of its size. This ensures that the overall success of your EM programme is guaranteed and that multi-site businesses are able to monitor and evaluate individual success more effectively.



The moral imperative to make big changes is inescapable...that what we take for granted may not be here for our children

*Al Gore*



Humans merely share the Earth. We can only protect the land, not own it  
*Chief Seattle*

## Your Guarantee of Support

Over the past five years, we have established a proud reputation for delivering results. The degree to which individual businesses benefit depends largely on internal management practice and operational commitment to environmental performance. Your success will depend largely on the extent to which management apply and implement the recommendations and systems associated with Heritage.

We understand that your business focus has traditionally not been on environmental performance, and for this reason Heritage provides a comprehensive training and support service to members of your in-house environmental committee. We provide in-depth training on the Heritage programme, environmental performance management and goal setting, monitoring and reporting practices. This is underpinned by constant telephonic, electronic and on-site support from our team of professional consultants for any aspect of your overall programme.

At each stage of the Heritage Programme, you will be assisted with introducing and maintaining systems and procedures that have been developed to achieve our four objectives. These are:

- *To reduce the effect that the operations of the business has on its environment and surrounding communities;*
- *To increase awareness and sound management systems that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the business and it's surrounding environment;*
- *To reduce the operating costs and expenses of the operation and thereby improve the profits through sound environmental practices and;*
- *To realise the full potential of sustainable business activities for future generations*

## Unique International Recognition

Joining Heritage identifies your business as an internationally recognised responsible and sustainable undertaking through the unique partnership that has been created between Heritage - Africa's leading environmental certification programme and Green Globe Certification - the worlds' leading and most respected environmental certification initiative.

Through Green Globe, Heritage enjoys the support of amongst others the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (**UNWTO**); The World Travel and Tourism Council (**WTTC**); The United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**) and the Global Responsible Tourism Organisation (**GRTO**).

Members of Heritage have a unique opportunity to become co-certified members of Green Globe Certification - thereby enjoying all the benefits associated with the internationally recognised and respected Green Globe label.



## Our Evaluation Criteria

In evaluating the environmental performance of a participating business, the Heritage programme considers four primary areas of operations. These include:

1. **Management Systems:** The development of a practical and effective environmental policies and procedures for the business is a cornerstone of the programme.
2. **Communication and Marketing:** By developing a healthy understanding of environmental issues with staff and customers alike, the effective maintenance and management of environmental programmes is assured.
3. **Resource Management:** "If you can't measure – you can't manage" is a very true saying and the measurement of resources utilisation by the establishment (water, energy, waste, etc) serves to provide a benchmark for future development.
4. **Community Development:** The extent to which the community is incorporated into the activities of the business – and to what extent their lives are impacted upon (negatively or positively), will determine the success of any programme.

These main sectors are further enhanced by a comprehensive evaluation of everything from procurement and supply policies; the supply chain and even the extent to which the business contributes to the overall improvement of the environment in which it operates. Everything that impacts on the environment is considered and members are assisted throughout the process to source and apply alternatives where necessary.

The programme evaluates each business on a weighted score system of evaluation, and this – together with incremental increases in certain category requirements, will determine the extent to which the business advances through the three tiers of the programme.

## Your Commitment and Vision

No Environmental Management Programme can work without commitment and focus by the business itself. Heritage is not about someone coming to run your management system—its all about guiding you and providing your team with the skills, vision and guidance necessary to ensure your own sustainable management systems.

You hold the key to your on future. You can continue running your business as usual by failing to understand or mitigate your impacts, or you can choose the moral alternative by committing your business to a more caring and sustainable future today.

After all... don't future generations have the right to expect nothing less than our commitment today?

Heritage—The Caring Face of Tourism



Poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for sustainable development

*"The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development"*



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