MEDIA RELEASE

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BHISHO AIRPORT UPGRADE COMPLETED THIS WEEK

The R70 million upgrade of the Bhisho Airport has been completed this week paving way for potential investors to come forward with their proposals.

Expected proposals include further development of airport facilities for business purposes, vehicle hire, shuttle services, catering services etc.

“Our doors are wide open for any investor that wants to come forward and add value in this project, which seeks to breath new life to the Bhisho Airport,” said Roads and Transport MEC Gloria Barry.

In October 2008, MEC Barry will host an Open Day at the airport for possible investors to interact with the department.

The upgrade forms part of the Blue Skyway Aviation Strategy, which was unveiled by the Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport in October 2006 in an effort to maximize the potential of the Bhisho and Mthatha airports and bring new life to the rural airstrips within the province.

The main objective of this strategy is to ensure adherence to the National Policy (White Paper on Civil Aviation of March 2005), where it is stated that government should not be involved with operating airports, but should encourage private sector involvement. Government, however, remains responsible for ensuring that airports contribute to the socio-economic development of the area.

Two months ago the airport re-opened its refueling facility following an upgrade by Air BP and provides 30 000 l Avgas and 30 000l Jet A1.
The newly revamped facility is operated by 43 Air School, which is currently using the airport for advanced training of pilots. Its trainees include 16 students from Rwanda, who are now residing at the airport.

Later this year, 180 student pilots and 120 aircraft technicians from Southern Sudan are expected to start their training programme for a period of three (3) years. These students will arrive in phases and by December 2008, a group of 66 students will be receiving training at the Bhisho Airport.

This month, another group from India will be trained at the airport followed by another team from Europe next year.

43 Air School have been given additional accommodation in the SAPS Air Wing complex at Bhisho airport.

These developments are expected to increase aircraft movements from 100 to 4000 per month.

Bhisho Airport upgrade will be followed by the commencement of the R60 million upgrade of the Mthatha Airport this month. On 25 September 2008, MEC Barry will officially hand over the Mthatha airport site to the contractor for refurbishment and officially launch the Airport Renaming Process to encourage members of the public to participate in changing its name.

Currently, the Eastern Cape Geographic Names Committee is facilitating the process towards the renaming of both Bhisho and Mthatha Airports in consultation with the relevant municipalities and communities.

The Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport would like to put it on record that any person or institution that wants to make a proposal in the renaming of the Bhisho and Mthatha airports will have to understand the governing regulations as these two airports belong to the Provincial Government.

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