1. INTRODUCTION
The initial Terms of Reference for Park Forums were developed as a result of a two-year consultative process which have, more recently, been adapted to reflect the Guiding Principles for SANParks Stakeholder Participation. The Terms of Reference for the Establishment and Operation of Park Forums have been structured to provide clear guidelines while remaining sufficiently flexible to allow for the development of a founding document or Park Forum Charter, reflecting the specific needs and circumstances of individual Parks.

2. WHAT IS A PARK FORUM?
Park Forums are established to encourage the building of partnerships in support of natural and cultural heritage conservation goals of SANParks. They are a means of providing a legitimate platform to communicate Park/SANParks/stakeholder issues, to ensure participation of stakeholders on matters of mutual relevance and to facilitate constructive interaction between the Parks and surrounding communities. It is expected that the Park Forum will allow for stakeholders to become informed about a range of views on issues which will ultimately result in better decisions that are more sensitive to stakeholder concerns and values.

3. STATUS OF PARK FORUMS
A Park Forum shall not be an independent legal entity and as such cannot bind its members. It is not a decision-making body, but is rather a communication forum that contributes towards informed decision-making by Park Management.

The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 endorses putting mechanisms in place to engage local communities in and adjacent to protected areas. Section 39 (3) states that Park Management Plans must be compiled in consultation with a wide range of interested and affected parties while Section 41 (2) calls for Park Management Plans to put procedures in place for public participation. This has been achieved through the establishment of Park Forums supported by the Guiding Principles for SANParks Stakeholder Participation.

It should be emphasised that SANParks is but one of a number of stakeholders comprising the Park Forum.

4. OBJECTIVES
The objectives of Park Forums are to:
Facilitate constructive interaction and engagement between the Park and stakeholders;
Facilitate the identification of strategic and other issues of mutual interest that could provide benefits to both the stakeholders and the Park;
Serve as a vehicle towards promoting strategic partnerships with stakeholders.

5. PRINCIPLES FOR STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION
All stakeholders participating in the Park Forum will be obliged to adhere to the Guiding Principles for SANParks Stakeholder Participation (SANParks officials form an integral part of the Forum and as such are subject to the same conditions for engagement).

The Guiding Principles are underpinned by the understanding that:
- Stakeholder engagement processes will vary to meet the specific needs of individual Parks;
- Methodologies adopted in stakeholder engagement processes will not conflict with legislation or the Guiding Principles for SANParks Stakeholder Participation;
- Stakeholders should be capacitated to allow for constructive input;
- There is an obligation on all stakeholders to be accountable for responsible participation;
- Park Forums are the preferred structures through which strategic issues and areas of mutual interest are addressed.

Furthermore, all stakeholder participation processes in SANParks will, *inter alia*;

- Define and communicate levels of decision-making and stakeholder involvement;
- Seek to obtain commitment from all stakeholders to a participatory process based on relevance, integrity, mutual respect, transparency and inclusiveness in order to seek the best possible solution;
- Ensure that the process provides the opportunity for input from all stakeholders within reasonable timeframes, emphasising the sharing of information, joint-learning and capacity building;
- Ensure that processes recognise all knowledge, indigenous and ordinary, as well as the diversity of values and opinions that exist between stakeholders;
- Promote participation by stakeholders through timeous and full disclosure of all relevant and appropriate information;
- Provide feedback on the outcome of the process to stakeholders and demonstrate how their inputs have been considered in the decision making process.

6. RECOGNITION OF PARK FORUM MEMBERSHIP
The names of nominees elected to serve on the Park Forum, will be submitted by the Park Manager to the Managing Executive: Parks. They will endorse the nomination and in the process ensure that the membership reflects the demographics of the area in which the Park is situated.
7. STRUCTURE OF PARK FORUMS

7.1 Membership
The most efficient manner in which the Park Forum can operate is through membership made up of representatives of various recognised constituencies. Park Forum members will thus serve on the Park Forum as representatives of a particular constituency. Membership on the Park Forum by individuals will be considered by the respective Park Forum on a case by case basis.

Participation on the Forum may be organised into portfolios with a specific strategic focus, into work groups to deal with matters as they arise, or may be of a more general nature. The Park Forum may co-opt further participants for a specific purpose and on a basis agreeable to the Park Forum.

7.2 Termination of Membership
- Resignation from the Park Forum
  Members of the Park Forum wishing to terminate their service will submit a letter of resignation to the Chairperson of the Park Forum, which will be tabled during a Park Forum meeting. A record of the resignation will be sent to the Park Manager and forwarded to Managing Executive: Parks.

- Suspension and/or dismissal from the Park Forum
  Members may be suspended, or requested to vacate their positions from the Park Forum on grounds of incapacity or misbehaviour, or conduct which is contrary to the agreed Code of Conduct drawn up for the Park Forum.

7.3 Management
The management structure could comprise:
- Chairperson
- Vice chairperson
- Secretary
- Secretariat (SANParks Official)
- Park Forum members

7.4 Term of Office
A Park Forum member will serve on the Park Forum for 2 years from the date on which the revised Terms of Reference for the Establishment and Operation of Park Forums, the Founding Document/ Park Forum Charter are adopted. After this, membership needs to be reconfirmed by their constituencies every 2 years.

7.5 Schedule of Meetings
The Park Forum should meet quarterly with at least one broader stakeholder meeting taking place per annum. Working groups, if established, shall meet on an ad hoc basis as and when the task at hand demands.
7.6 Conflict of Interests
As soon as a member becomes aware of any conflicts of interest, he/she is required to fully disclose such conflict immediately. The Forum will rule on whether the Park Forum member is to withdraw from the discussion.

7.7 Conflict Resolution
Should conflict arise in the Park Forum the individual Park Forum members shall be entitled to request that the conflict be referred to the Regional Park Manager. If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, a Park Forum Member intending to take this matter further, shall be entitled and obliged to take up the matter directly with SANParks in his/her individual capacity or on behalf of the constituency that he/she represents as a result thereof.

8. FOUNDING DOCUMENT OR PARK FORUM CHARTER
A founding document or Park Forum Charter, based on these Terms of Reference for the Establishment and Operation of Park Forums and incorporating the requirements and individual needs of each Park and the Park Forum, will be drafted and accepted by the Park Forum.

This founding document or Charter will contain as a minimum:

- Objectives of the Park Forum as referred to in 4 above as well as any additional objectives;
- The provisions dealing with matters reflected in 7 above;
- A Code of Conduct for Park Forum members reflecting the Guidelines for SANParks Stakeholder Participation referred to in 5 above;
- A communications strategy to ensure effective communication between Park Forum members and their constituencies.

9. ADMINISTRATION
- The Park Manager will chair the first meeting of the Park Forum and will hand over to the elected chair during the inaugural meeting.
- The Park will act as a secretariat for the Park Forum. The Park Manager will ensure that appropriate resources are available for this purpose.
- Each Park will provide logistical and resource support by developing an appropriate budget.
- Each Park, in the case of financial need, will consider mechanisms to facilitate participation by Park Forum members.
- A communication strategy for the Park Forum will be developed and effectively implemented.

10. ROLE OF THE PARK MANAGER
The Park Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the Park Forum, once successfully established, continues to operate effectively to strengthen the relationship between Parks and neighbouring communities/stakeholders.

The success of the Park Forum will be determined by:

- The level of meaningful participation of stakeholders on Park Forums based on the ability to work as partners regardless of status and level;
- Representivity of Forums, measured against the demographics of the area and addressing issues of equity;
• Strengthening of communication through Park Forums to communities;
• Building of constituencies to enhance the support for, and ownership of the natural and cultural conservation efforts of SANParks by all South Africans;
• Improved access for local communities to Parks;
• Accurate record keeping, administration and reporting on Park Forum activities.