

Association for Tourism Hwange

Explore Hwange: Untamed and Unforgettable



17 October 2025

To:

The Managing Director
Asphalt Products
Stand 14999
Donnington West
Bulawayo

Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Detour Route Cross Mabale - Mpofu Turn - Dete - Cross Dete

Dear Sir/Madam

On behalf of the tourism and conservation stakeholders operating within and around the Hwange region, we wish to express our collective concern regarding the proposed detour route intended to facilitate the rehabilitation of the Bulawayo-Victoria Falls Road, specifically the 16 km section between Cross Mabale and Cross Dete.

While we fully appreciate and support the government's ongoing efforts to improve national infrastructure and connectivity, we are deeply concerned about the current detour proposal, which redirects heavy traffic through a route that traverses sensitive wildlife and community areas from Cross Mabale through Mpofu Turn, to Dete Shops and Cross Dete.

This route, though operationally convenient in the short term, presents several significant environmental, safety and socio-economic risks:

1. **Wildlife Safety and Conservation Impact**

This corridor lies adjacent to key wildlife habitats where species such as elephants, zebras, antelope, impala and many more freely move between protected and communal lands. Increased heavy vehicle movement at high speeds poses a serious risk of collisions, disturbance to animal behavior and habitat degradation.

2. **Community and Tourist Safety**

The route in question is narrow, with limited visibility and infrastructure. It was never designed to accommodate high volumes of heavy trucks and buses. The risk of accidents involving villagers, livestock and tourist vehicles including open game drive vehicles carrying international visitors is deeply concerning.

3. **Road Integrity and Infrastructure Damage**

The Mpofu-Dete and Dete-Cross Dete roads are not engineered to sustain heavy truck traffic. Continuous use by tankers and long-haul vehicles will rapidly deteriorate the road surface, resulting in long-term damage and high repair costs.

4. **Environmental and Aesthetic Concerns**

Increased litter, dust and noise pollution from large vehicles threaten to undermine Hwange's reputation as a pristine tourism area. Overnight truck parking, engine idling and roadside

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waste will compromise both the environment and visitor experience.

5. Legal and Logistical Considerations

According to established road construction protocols, detours should remain within reasonable proximity of the affected section, typically not exceeding 5-10 km from the main work area. The proposed 45 km deviation through wildlife zones raises questions about compliance with standard national engineering and environmental guidelines.

We respectfully request that **Asphalt Products**, in consultation with the **Ministry of Transport** and relevant authorities, consider alternative solutions that align with both infrastructural and environmental priorities. Possible options include:

- Establishing a temporary 16km detour parallel to the highway, consistent with approaches adopted by other contractors on the same route.
- Utilising existing dirt roads to the northeast of the A8 highway, which may be longer but traverse populated areas rather than wildlife corridors. With pre-grading and proper maintenance, such routes could safely handle temporary traffic while minimising ecological disruption.

Hwange's story is one of collaboration, a living network of schools, conservationists, community leaders and tourism operators who share one landscape and one responsibility. From **Painted Dog Conservation**, **Soft Foot Alliance**, **Panthera** and **Friends of Hwange**, to the classrooms of **Detema**, **Makwandara**, **Chilisa**, and **Marist Brothers**, every voice has echoed the same truth: progress must not come at the cost of coexistence. Our tourism partners - **Gwango Wildlife Safaris**, **Camp Silwane**, **Iganyana Tented Camp**, **Wildtrack Adventures**, **The Hide**, **Hwange Safari Lodge**, **Somalisa Camp**, **Ride Zimbabwe** and many others - have built livelihoods around protecting the beauty that draws the world to Hwange.

Together with institutions like **ZimParks**, the **Forestry Commission**, **ACZ** and the **Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education**, we form a coalition rooted in responsibility. The recent **Forbes** ranking of Zimbabwe as the top country to visit affirmed what we already know, that our nation's natural heritage and tourism potential are globally unmatched. Yet, this proposed detour threatens to erode that achievement by undermining the very ecosystems and communities that earned us such recognition.

We therefore urge that the proposal be urgently reviewed with full stakeholder engagement to ensure that development aligns with Hwange's ecological integrity, community well-being and tourism economy. On behalf of ATH, we reaffirm our readiness to collaborate with the **Ministry of Transport**, local councils and community leaders to identify a practical, responsible and sustainable path forward, one that protects the road ahead without compromising the wild heart that defines Hwange.

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