

Proposal to renovate to Old district commissioners buildings in Karonga old boma as extension for CMCK purposes

1. Project description

1.1. Project Aim

The project aim is to secure funds and co-ordinate expertise for the dual purpose of renovating the **Old District Commissioners Office** and compound and repairing the **African Lakes Company** and **missionary graveyard**, in Karonga Township, to their original state for the preservation of Malawi's historical and cultural legacy.

1.2. Location of project in Malawi

The project is to be located in Karonga town, situated on the far northern shore of lake Malawi. The project is to undertake work at two separate locations within the old township; one, at the site of the former District Commissioners office, the other, at a lake front location near to the site of the first Protestant church.

1.3. Summary and Justification

The project objective is to oversee the restoration of two important historical and cultural sites in Karonga town, namely, the old District Commissioners Office and accompanying buildings, and the African Lakes Company and mission graveyard.

The latter compound comprises the buildings of the **British District Commissioners' office**, the original **post office**, the **TEBA labour recruiting office**, and the **traditional authority court** buildings. These structures, long since abandon for official use, have sadly fallen into a state of decay and are presently occupied by squatters. The District Commissioner's Office, the first of

the buildings to be constructed, is the oldest building that remains standing in Karonga township and dates, most likely, to the turn of the century. It was built next to an unusually large **Boabab tree** (*Adansonia digitata*), which had long been used as meeting point for trade, political discussion and cultural events of the indigenous Ngonde people. This tree is the subject of fables and legend, both African and European. One of the most popular tales concerns the use of the tree in the defense of the Commissioners Office during the First World War; local inhabitants recall that a canon was mounted in the tree, while weapons were stored in a large hollow chamber within the tree.

The pioneer's graveyard is located a short distance from the starting point of the **Stevenson Road**, on the Karonga lake-shore. The graveyard bears the name of the pioneer British settlers who, in carrying out their commitment to Church and commerce, lost their lives and put their children's lives to loss. The graveyard contains the bodies of former employees of the African Lakes Company and the old mission. The graves, itself, bear testimony to the strong religious faith and spiritual guidance of these pioneers. Their memory deserves the respect of Malawians as much as of their European descents. The date of 1883, inscribed on the headstone of **James Stewart**, the first constructor of the Stevensons Road, marks the beginnings of Christian burial in Karonga, a religious practice that is now universal in the district. The fallen tombstones, broken and overgrown, give little solace to the souls that lie therein, and indeed, to those which wish to pay their respect. Amount the lesser known names buried within its protective bounds were Eirene Hope, whereupon an inscription on the tombstone reads 'Passed away April 16, 1913, aged 6 1/2 weeks. In the morn those angel faces smile I have loved long since and lost awhile'.

The main purpose of renovating these historical sites is to preserve a part of Karonga's cultural and social past, and thereby provide improved access to the structures built within and information for both local inhabitants and foreign visitors. The structures of the District Commissioner's Office compound will, once renovated, be maintained and used by the **Uraha Foundation (Malawi)**. The Uraha Foundation is a Malawian non-profit organisation of individuals, whose primary aims are as follows:

- To establish and manage a cultural and museum centre
- To popularise research findings of Malawi's natural heritage and cultural legacy
- To improve access to the remains of natural and social pre-history for primary and secondary levels of education
- To preserve the pre-historic fossil treasures of Malawi
- To facilitate national and international research and co-operation in Karonga district

The Uraha Foundation (Malawi) seeks to use the renovated buildings for

three separate purposes: first, as office and headquarters, second, as hall for hosting special exhibitions, seminars and presentations, and third, to provide guest accommodation for researchers, friends of the Karonga museum, and dignified guests and sponsors.

The restoration work on the buildings and graveyard is to be undertaken by local (Karonga based) artisans under the supervision of the Department of Antiquities staff. A short-term technical expert will be required to support the works planning phase and to monitor works progress, reporting monthly to the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) and financial sponsor. The total cost of renovating the building is estimated at MK 2300 000.00 (two million, three hundred thousand Kwacha). The local Karonga community, as represented by the Traditional Authorities, Chief Kyungu, Chief Karonga, Chief Wasambo and Chief Kilupula will contribute sand, aggregate, bricks, and poles.

1.4. The Applicant

The project applicant is the Uraha Foundation (Malawi). The Foundation is based in Karonga town, with an office at the Town Council building. Membership of the Uraha Foundation is open and unlimited. The Foundation is non-partisan with no political allegiances and does not support any single order or cultural community.

The Uraha Foundation (Malawi) came into existence with purpose of overseeing the creation and establishment of the Cultural and Museum Centre, Karonga. The Foundation was formed in November 1999 and officially registered in April 2000. It is governed by a board of Trustees comprising local business persons, notable Karonga residents, and international researchers, with ex officio representation by the Chairman of KADET, the Karonga District Commissioner, the Karonga Town Clerk, and the National Commissioner for Culture (see Appendix A).

The Founder members were motivated, in particular, to have the knowledge learned from fossil discoveries in the region shared with ordinary people. Since the first fossils were discovered in the Karonga district in the late nineteenth century, there have been many important discoveries that have provided scientists with information about human and animal biological origins and natural history. One of the most impressive discoveries was that of the Malawisaurus dinosaur, whose bones were found in the Sitwe river valley, central Karonga. Equally significant, was the discovery in 1991 of the earliest fossil remains of the genus homo, who lived in the Malawi rift valley region 2.5 million years ago.

The Uraha Foundation (Malawi) secured funding (MK 20 million) from the European Commission for the construction of a **Cultural and Museum Centre** at Karonga. The construction of the centre is underway with building work due to be completed in February 2002. Further funding has been obtained from the Deutsche Ausgleichsbank to supply equipment for the associated research centre.

1.5 Project objectives

The project objective is to oversee the restoration of two important historical and cultural sites in Karonga town, namely, the old District Commissioners Office and accompanying buildings (WENLA Office, Post Office, and Traditional Court), and the graveyard of the African Lakes Co-operation employees and early missionaries. The objective accords with the primary aim of the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) to improve public access to the regions historical / cultural sites for primary and secondary levels of education. The restoration of the old District Commissioners building will, moreover, contribute towards the Foundation's aim of facilitating national and internal research and co-operation in Karonga district.

1.5.1. Renovation of the Old District Commissioners' Office and buildings

As part of the concept of creating a cultural and museum centre for Karonga town, the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) saw the need for additional facilities for the purposes of education / training, administration, accommodation and public information. The existence of the unused buildings of the old District Commissioners site, comprising five structures, offered an ideal location for providing such services. The renovation of the buildings will enable the Foundation to provide the following services:

- An **active learning and information centre** to provide visitors with information about Karonga district, including scheduled cultural events, and places of historical / cultural interest. The centre, to be located in the WENLA building, will furthermore provide a permanent office for the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) as its headquarters.
- A **lecture hall** to enable lectures and audio-visual presentations to be given to school children, research students, and guest attending special events / fund raising meetings. The lecture hall is to be situated in east wing of the old District Commissioners Office.

- An **exhibition hall** to house special collections of historical materials, photographs, and contemporary works of art. The exhibition hall is to be situated in the west wing of the old District Commissioners Office. A guest room to provide accommodation for researchers, friends of the Cultural and Museum Centre, and invited guests. The Old Post Office will be renovated for this purpose.
- A **pavilion** for hosting group educational discussions, cultural demonstrations (including dances and music) and for social functions and entertainment. The two old traditional court building will be renovated for this purpose.

The structures will be renovated, under close supervision of the **Department of Antiquities**, in accordance with their original appearance. A construction supervisor will be required to design and plan the renovations and provide site supervision. The renovation work is to be done by a local contractor with local artisans and labourers.

The Karonga community, through their traditional leaders, will provide the sand, aggregate (stone) and bricks required. The community will, furthermore, assist with the construction of a fence through the provision of poles.

The needs of the Karonga district-wide community for these education and information services are pressing. The district and administrative town (Boma) are comparatively lacking in the necessary infrastructure to provide these important educational, information, and social services. Civic education facilities and cultural programmes are especially lacking.

There is, at present, no place where friends and supporters of the Culture and Museum Centre can gather to meet and contribute to its success and sustainability. It is anticipated that the centre will attract visitors from all towns and districts within the country and, no doubt, from within the sub-region and abroad. In order to tap into the potential support of these visitors, the renovated buildings will serve a particularly valuable purpose.

It is widely acknowledged (see letters of support) that establishing a location as set about above, with integrated functions, the unfulfilled, yet pressing, needs of the Karonga citizens can be adequately met.

1.5.2. Repair of the African Lakes Company and

mission graveyard

The graveyard of the African Lakes Company and mission is an important cultural / historical landmark. Yet few visitors get to know of this site, while only the elderly citizens of Karonga can recall a time when the graveyard was well maintained and respected. Until recently, the graveyard was hidden beneath dense bush and shrub overgrowth, with none of the graves either visible or accessible. The Uraha Foundation has recently cleared the bush. It was then discovered that all the tombstones, apart from one, lie broken and scattered.

The proposal plans for the full restoration of the graveyard and repair of the tombstones. The work is to be undertaken by local artisans working under the supervision of the Uraha Foundation building committee. The Department of Antiquities will provide technical and advisory support. The community, through Chief Karonga, will provide a contribution of sand, stone, and bricks for the construction of a low set perimeter fence.

In order for the graveyards to be included on the tourist agenda of places / sites of historical interest, the proposal makes allowance for the construction of signboards and information brochures. The Uraha Foundation will sponsor a student from University of Malawi to research the personal histories of the names buried within the graveyard. These research findings will add content to existing written knowledge on history of the African Lake Company and first missionary activities at Karonga.

1.6. The beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries of the repair and rehabilitation of the two historical sites are divided into three groups:

First, the local school children of Karonga will benefit from the opportunity to inspect and access these sites, learning in the field. They will benefit, furthermore, from the possibility for school teaching lessons to integrate the use of audio-visual materials and displays through utilising the facilities of the interactive information centre, pavilion and lecture hall.

Second, visitors to Karonga, including international tourists, will benefit from the provision of instructive and informative signboards, pamphlets, and special interest displays. The site of the old District Commissioners' Office will remain open to the general public, with facilities for visitors to rest and recuperate (including a picnic area), with accommodation available (subject to pre-

booking) on a cost recovery basis.

Third, students, researchers, and academics, will benefit from access to the lecture hall, exhibition hall, pavilion, and accommodation at the old District Commissioner's site. These facilities will be made available on a cost recovery basis.

1.7. Project Management structure

The project will be managed by two sub-committees of the Uraha Foundation (Malawi), namely, a financial control committee and a building technical committee.

The financial control committee will be responsible for the financial management of the allocated project funds. The committee will monitor expenditure and report monthly to the Trustees of the Uraha Foundation. The financial control committee will comprise three members of the Foundation and the Director of Antiquities. All expenditure will be controlled in accordance with the four eye principle: hence, two of the three members will be required to approve and authorise all transactions. The monthly financial statement will be sent to the project donor / sponsor not later than two weeks into the succeeding month. The project funds will be audited at two stages: firstly at three months and then upon the completion of the project works. The auditor report will be sent to the donor / sponsor not later than one month after the audit.

A building committee will oversee the technical and building aspects of the project. The committee will issue instructions to the construction supervision who will co-ordinate with the works contractors. The committee will consult with technical specialists from the Department of Antiquities in the design and materials plan for the building work. The committee will produce a mid-stage and final technical report which, upon approval of the Trustees, will be forward to the donor / sponsor.

1.8. The Budget

The reader is referred to contact Uraha Foundation to get a more detailed overview of the total budget which is amounting up to MK 6 Million.

The budget line costs are actual costs, calculated on the basis of

quotations for the required building work and incorporating the prevailing market rate for competent expertise, materials and operational costs.

Budget line A: Site Management

The budget provides for a competent site manager for 6 months to co-ordinate the building work. The budget further provides for 3 months of secretarial services; these services are required for the preparation of documents, vouchers, the typing of technical and financial reports, and communication. The budget provides a lump sum for any other personnel related expenses, including the cost of travel / accommodation to Lilongwe / Blantyre to report to donor / sponsor.

Budget line B: Coordination and supervision

The budget provides for the costs of subsistence allowances and fuel required for the participation of the technical / specialist staff from the Department of Antiquities. The budget will support 3 persons for 5 days a month for 6 months.

Budget line C: Contractors

The budget covers the total costs of the required contracting work for the renovation of the two respective sites. These costs include all material, staff, and logistics costs.

Budget line D: Publicity

The budget provides for the cost of constructing and erecting signboards for directing visitors to key historic sites, including the graveyard and old District Commissioners' Office buildings. The budget make allowance for the cost of handing over the old District Commissioners' Office site to the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) to be held in Trusteeship.

Budget line E: Direct Costs

The budget provides for the cost of fuel and maintenance of the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) vehicle that will be used in the supervision of the project building works. The budget additionally provides for the costs of electricity and water at the old District Commissioners' Office site for the maintenance of a project site office.

1.9. Project duration

The project is planned to complete building and restoration work within six months of commencement. Work on the repair of the tombstones is planned to be complete within the first eight weeks of project commencement. The graveyard renovation will, it is anticipated, help to highlight the work of the Uraha Foundation (Malawi), with the support of donors, in preserving Karonga's historical legacy and thus attract local and foreign support for the project objectives.

1.10. Sustainability of the structures after project financing

The buildings of the old District Commissioners Office and the African Lakes Company and missionary graveyard will be maintained in their restored condition by the Uraha Foundation (Malawi). The Foundation will earn revenue for this purpose from the guest accommodation facility, lease of the lecture hall, entry fee at special exhibitions, and from the sale of pamphlets / information leaflets to visitors and tourists. These services / facilities will be determined at market rates and in accordance with cost recovery principles.

The linkages between the Uraha Foundation (Malawi) and international research and student teaching programmes, which are being coordinated by the Cultural and Museum Centre, Karonga, will provide a further source of income through rental of the facilities.

