

What is the Blue Deal: Vredefort Dome Project?

The Blue Deal South Africa Programme is part of the International Blue Deal Programme between (i) the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Infrastructure & Water Management and all the Dutch Water Authorities and (ii) the South African national partners (DWS, MISA, WRC, and SALGA) and local project partners on a case by case basis.

The Blue Deal Programme focuses on supporting regional and national governments worldwide to strengthen good water management by sufficient knowledge and expertise, well-functioning organisations and cooperation with key stakeholders. The ambitious goal of the Blue Deal is helping 20 million people in 40 catchment areas around the world to gain access to clean, sufficient and safe water. The Programme will run from 2019 until 2030; with the first phase concluding in 2022.

The **Blue Deal Vredefort Dome Project** focuses on improving the water quality of the Vaal River within the proposed Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site (WHS). This site is in the process of being proclaimed as a WHS under national legislation. However, the site has various challenges including deteriorating water quality of the Vaal River which transverses this site. The water quality is impacted by various water use activities upstream and within the proposed WHS. One of the main sources of pollution is the Parys Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW), operated by Ngwathe Local Municipality which is located just upstream of the core of the proposed WHS boundary yet within the buffer of the proposed WHS boundary. This WWTW is dysfunctional, and as a result discharges non-compliant effluent into the river system with significant negative impact.

The project seeks to optimise the performance, operations and maintenance of Parys Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs) so as to improve its effluent quality and consequently improve the water quality of the Vaal River to within regulated standard limits. This will build confidence of the water users and no longer be construed as a barrier to the proclamation of the Vredefort Dome as a WHS. This aim will be achieved through partnerships and cooperation with different organisations including all spheres of government, state owned entities and non-governmental organisations.

The Key Activities comprising Phase 1 (2019 – 2022) include the following:

Activity 1	<i>Data management.</i> Enhance surface water quality and river health monitoring programmes in order to: (1) determine the impact of water use activities on the Vaal River and (2) monitor and enforce compliance
Activity 2	<i>Stakeholder engagement</i> The quality of the Vaal River affects various users and associated partners. Stakeholder engagement focuses on (1) reestablishment of District Water Forum, transformation of the Rietpoort Irrigation Board and align the objectives of the project with those of the Mooi River Catchment Forum (3) promote environmental and water education during environmental days (World Water Week, World Environment Day, National Arbor Day, Mandela Day)
Activity 3	<i>Wastewater management</i> (1) Review of the operation and maintenance of Parys WWTWs through suitable institutional and operational assessments (e.g. MuSSA, Green Drop) (2) Foster partnerships within the water sector (DWA, DWS, MISA, CoGTA & SALGA) in order to enhance the capacity of Ngwathe Local Municipality for enhanced operation and maintenance of the WWTW