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**‘BIO PARC MEDITERRANEAN’ in CYPRUS**

 Celebrating the natural richness and resources of Cyprus

Concept and discussion document

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THE BIO PARC MEDITERRANEAN

CONCEPT

Bio Parc Mediterranean will be a new high-profile visitor attraction on Cyprus dedicated to all that the environment, biology, bioscience, and nature have meant and will mean to the entire Mediterranean region, but especially to Cyprus itself.

The site’s fundamental financial sustainability and wide audience appeal will be guaranteed by a large paying public’s fascination with the living world. Bio Parc will, however, also promote all kinds of political, social, scientific, cultural and economic topics of critical interest to senior decision makers. So Bio Parc will highlight the connection between Cyprus’ biology and ecology on the one hand, and the country’s cultural and political future on the other. It will reconcile environmental imperatives with commercial realities.

As communities on our divided island edge forward towards new understandings, Bio Parc will also be a powerful symbol of shared natural heritage and future economic prospects.

Bio Parc will consolidate Cyprus’ pivotal position within the Mediterranean region, both the cradle of civilisation itself and, today, a crucial economic highway and commercial community.

Developing this concept and ultimately delivering the project will demand a very broad exchange of expertise and skills between Cyprus and the UK *(discussions having already taken place with Cornwall’s Eden Project, the Cambridge Conservation Initiative at the University of Cambridge and a leading UK zoological society)*. This will affirm and develop the existing commercial, cultural and political partnerships binding our two Commonwealth nations, and recognise the importance of the UK tourist and investor to Cyprus’ economy.

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**Deliverables**

Highlighting the heritage of Cyprus and the Mediterranean

Nature is a vital component of the Island’s fundamental identity. In its arts, crafts, music, painting, literature, poetry, culinary traditions, historical narrative, iconography etc, Cyprus’ heritage is rooted in its biology. The Mediterranean’s mythology in particular is imbued with animal and plant references. The extinct Cypriot pygmy elephant may for instance well have been the basis of the Cyclops legend; and lions, common across Greece until 400 BC, have blended into multiple myth and legend.

Championing Cyprus’ diversity, traditions and identity

As a universal value an interest in nature provides an unparalleled opportunity to unite Cyprus’ range of cultures. As well as exploring elements of a shared natural heritage across time, Bio Parc might profile recent surprising discoveries as to the true genetic background of populations living on the Island.

Social and community benefits for Cyprus’ own population and for visitors

As an attractive urban green-space, Bio Parc will provide a relaxed location for families to mingle, meet and socialise, engendering civic pride, responsibility, social integration and common purpose.

A platform to explore Cyprus and the Mediterranean’s macro-environmental issues

Bio Parc’s natural and biological themes provide an ideal platform to discuss associated macro-environmental issues, such as energy conservation, climate change, soil erosion, deforestation and drought. Decision makers, legislators and commercial stakeholders will have an opportunity to present, interpret and debate these topics with a large constituency.

A springboard to highlight the importance of Cyprus’ economically important natural resources

The general public’s natural attraction to wonderful animals and plants offers an opportunity to move on to tell the story of other prosperity generating natural resources. Bio Parc will explore and interpret wine and olive production, citrus farming, forestry and fisheries and other assets in the Island’s agri-economy. Oil and natural gas are of course also natural products and part of the fascinating paleontological and geological story of Cyprus.

Benefitting Cyprus’ overall nature tourism economy

Bio Parc will act as a tourism hub, encouraging its overseas visitors into a broader, longer and ‘repeat visit’ interest in Cyprus’ wide spectrum of natural attractions and outdoor activities. Attracting visitors with an innate interest in nature, Bio Parc will be a gateway to the pleasures of walking, cycling, bird watching, kayaking: to enjoying the Troodos mountains, lakes and waterfalls or visiting Cyprus 10 National Forest Parks.

Protecting and celebrating Cyprus’ and the Mediterranean’s native biodiversity and ecosystems. Bio Parc will be home to carefully selected, iconic Cypriot animals and plants *(… perhaps Cypriot Mouflon, Imperial Eagle, Cyprus cyclamen as pictured…),* and provide a powerful message to visitors’ on the importance and vulnerability of the nation’s biodiversity. 44% of Cyprus is forested or semi natural, with several priority wildlife habitats; and the ‘UN buffer zone’ partially abandoned by human activity, has inadvertently created a haven for fauna and flora.

Bio Parc may form an association with Terra Cypria and/or the Loana Foundation. The prominent new site could provide new offices for these important NGOs and ensure that a large public (residents and overseas visitors) are more aware of and engaged with their vital work. Bio Parc might tell wider and older stories as to the overall biodiversity of the Mediterranean region, or the pre-human ‘bio history’ of Aphrodite’s island and the region.

Promoting Cyprus’ technological and scientific economy

Bio Parc’s themes will promote the Island’s growing energy, environmental science, and biotech sectors. Plants, animals and the visitor experience in general will be skilfully interpreted to draw out underlying principles, not only in biology, but in geology, physics, chemistry, maths, environmental science, and mechanics. The new facility will be a public arena advocate setting the tone for technical innovation, for scientific research and for Cyprus’ development into an advance economy and knowledge society in further fields such as crop science, pharmaceuticals, and microbiology.

Supporting Cyprus’ young people

Young people and students are often eager to pursue work opportunities somehow associated with animals and wildlife. Bio Parc will not only itself provide some such positions, but also open young eyes to training and work in biology and environmental science related areas they have may not have even considered. It will act as an overall advocate for university study and career aspiration.

Benefitting Cyprus’ universities

Bio Parc will support the Island’s excellent community of universities in their research, technology, teaching and student recruitment needs, and look to forge new partnerships with prestigious higher education institutions in the UK and elsewhere around joint research projects.

Endowing Cyprus with a new iconic, urban structure and promoting sustainable technology

Although an open air, ‘park like’ experience, Bio Parc will require a certain physical fabric. This should reflect cutting-edge building technology, the highest possible design values and a uniqueness of iconography. The resulting structures will add a unmistakable silhouette to the cityscape of Nicosia (or whichever settlement with which the project might be associated). Over time this will become instantly recognisable around the world, ‘beating the drum’ for Cyprus and place marketing the island for visitors, incoming students, residents and investors.

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 **Bio Parc Mediterranean – a unique international landmark**

As a leading visitor attraction, a science centre and an icon of Cypriot identity and culture, Bio Parc would endow the Island with a new landmark of international standing, heralding Cyprus’ continued economic and social growth.

 A summary of Bio Parc’s potential features:

• A modern, conservation orientated, high welfare, native species zoological collection

• A public park and gardens serving as a community amenity.

• A sculpture park and natural history museum.

• A botanic gardens.

• A public venue for the appreciation and understanding of science.

• An iconic architectural structure, creating a distinctive skyline for its locality and an instantly recognisable image to the benefit of the Island’s top level place marketing.

• A showcase for renewable technology and green building techniques.

Aquatic Cyprus

As the Queen of the Mediterranean, Cyprus is surrounded by an extraordinarily rich aquatic ecosystem: Aquatic biology (fresh and salt water) could therefore also feature as a major theme at Bio Parc Mediterranean.

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**Bio Parc Mediterranean – a ‘*more than the sum of its parts’* concept**

Championing the culture and heritage of the Island of Cyprus

A shop window for economically important natural resources

Promoting the overall wild landscape tourism offer

A major new tourist attraction

A shop window for Cypriot universities and a new platform for higher education partnerships with prestigious UK institutions

An iconic new cityscape structure

A symbol of national reconciliation – a shared green facility

A partnership between Cypriot and UK expertise in:

* concept development
* business planning
* project delivery

**Bio Parc Mediterranean – *a new symbol of Cyprus itself***

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| **STAKEHOLDERS**  | **BENEFITS** |
| Senior political figures. Corporate sponsors.Tourism and national identity stakeholders. | An iconic national symbol showcasing Cyprus’ proud national culture and identity. |
| Cyprus’ economic stakeholders. | Attracting international investment by raising the profile of Cyprus’ national and commercial identity. |
| Cypriot and UK stakeholders. | Enhanced political, economic and cultural relationships. |
| Science sector stakeholders.Industry, government and research institutions | Public appreciation and engagement in Cypriot science and technology sectors. |
| Higher education stakeholders | Championing of Cypriot universities and new partnerships with overseas universities. |
| Stakeholders invested in the reconciliation process between Greek and Turkish populations | Supporting peace process and national reconciliation in a ‘nature knows no boundaries’ philosophy. |
| Bioscience and biodiversity stakeholders. | Botanic and zoological resources. |
| Culture and heritage stakeholders. | A new venue and attraction to promote appreciation of the Island’s culture heritage and art. |
| Tourism and industry stakeholders. | Inspiration gateway to natural tourism sites and activities across the Island. |

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REASONS TO SUPPORT BIO PARC MEDITERRANEAN

• Bio Parc Mediterranean will embrace Cyprus’ cultural, political and economic momentum through its natural and biological resources theming

• The Bio Parc experience will capitalise on the public’s fascination with the unique and iconic fauna of Cyprus and the Mediterranean, but moving far beyond conventional conceptions of botanic gardens or zoological collections

• The benefits of a modern, high profile, tourist attraction with an ecological and bio-science focus will appeal to senior political stakeholders and other decision makers who are invested in Cyprus overall future.

• Bio Parc’s theme, stories and components are an ideal platform to appeal to multiple forms of investment *(…public sector, plural EU funding budget lines, UK Government funds, private capital, philanthropic, commercial sponsorship, etc.)*

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THE FIRST STEPS

• A senior political stakeholder associated with Cyprus’ economic, scientific and cultural development should be invited to take an interest.

• International partners in the higher education and science sector should be approached. Discussions are already taking place with:

* leading UK universities;
* The Cambridge Conservation Initiative at the University of Cambridge
* Cornwall’s Eden Project;
* a major UK zoological society

Resource should be found to finance a small team including representatives of the above to visit the Island to draw up an initial business plan and begin to position Bio Parc to take advantage of various forms of investment available.

UK Government authorities ought to be then approached to explore potential in the following and similar budget lines:

* The Prosperity Fund
* The UK Grand Challenge
* The Newton Fund (not currently relevant to Cyprus, but in evolution)
* The Great Campaign

EU authorities engaged with as to budget lines in economic growth, agriculture/ rural development, environment, civil society, tourism, education and scientific research.