

## **Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) & Ministry of Tourism**



### **Competition to obtain the best proposal for development and investment of *Duqm Rock Garden***

#### **Introduction**

Oman is known by its diverse culture, nature and urban characteristics that created a unique experience for the visitors and tourists. In light of the general orientation of the Sultanate to implement the concept of sustainability in all its aspects (environmental - economic - social-cultural); The development and management of geotourism activities are considered as the first model in the Sultanate of Oman that deals with nature-related activities in protected areas. The development and management of this model is one of the focuses of the National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh) within the tourism labs. The National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh) is an action-oriented program derived from the 9th Five-Year Development Plan (2016 – 2020). The Program aims to contribute to the achievement of the Sultanate's vision of economic diversification by addressing the challenges faced by governmental, private and civil institutions.

One of the promising initiatives of the Tanfeedh program is to develop a Geopark in central Oman (Al Huqf Geopark) applying environmental natural elements in a themed tourist product, combining the geotourism-ecotourism concept to enhance the tourism values of the region.

The Initiative 1b of the Tanfeedh program is committed to Geotourism-Ecotourism growth in Oman and will work in partnership with potential investors to achieve the following objectives:

- Create high quality sustainable geotourism products, experiences, and activities that offer unique visitor experiences.
- Enhance Sultanate of Oman's reputation as a world leading geotourism destination.
- Allow responsible investments and community engagement while securing the legislative conservation of the Natural Sites within the Al Wusta Geopark and eventually to other Oman's natural sites.
- Support In- Country Value (ICV) by creating new jobs opportunities and support the economic growth of production of local products.
- Opportunities to highlight researches and information to local residents, policy makers, media representatives, and local schools.

In line of this initiative, this document describes as competition guidelines for geotourism proposals and the process for applying an Expression of Interest (EOI) for investors who interested to develop and invest in the Duqm Rock Garden.

### **Competition objective**

The government, represented by the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) and Ministry of Tourism, seeks to promote investment in Duqm Rock Garden

Thus, the Ministry of Tourism announces a competition to obtain the best proposal for development and investment of ***Duqm Rock Garden*** in this document illustrating the garden site, site initial studies, competition procedures and conditions.

### **Description of competition**

The competition is a process to enable specialized and qualified local and international companies and institutions to submit their bids to SEZAD as competitors for the best proposal for the tourism development of ***Duqm Rock Garden*** in the Sultanate of Oman.

### **Eligibility to enter the competition**

All companies, organizations and investors (local and international) with applicable skill and ability to invest have the right to submit their development proposals for the site. The competition process will be conducted in three stages: Stage 1: Submitting the EOI, Stage 2: Request for detailed proposal, and Stage 3: Final allocation.

## **General Criteria for tourism development:**

1. Proposals must fully comply with the provisions, Royal Decrees, laws and regulations in force in the Sultanate.
2. Any application that does not submit the required documents, or is otherwise incomplete or considered incompatible with any condition of investment may be rejected.
3. The Ministry and SEZAD shall **NOT** be liable for any company costs or costs paid to any party in Preparation of bids or responses to comments.
4. The timeframe for completing any initial infrastructure phase and opening the project for tourism operation must be within 3 years of the commencement of formal agreement.

## **Procedures and Competition Stages**

### **First Stage: Submitting the EOI**

The EOI is intended for investor(s) who can demonstrate experience in development and commercial operation of natural heritage sites and have the financial capability to develop and operate geotourism products, experiences or activities.

SEZAD and Tanfeedh initiative 1b team will evaluate EOI submissions against the evaluation criteria to shortlist investors who will be invited to the second stage of the tender process—the request for detailed proposal (RFP).

### **Conditions for competition application for stage 1:**

The following documents are required to apply to EOI submissions in **stage 1**:

1. Name of the company, its full address, and title of legally authorized person.
2. Expression of interest to confirm participation in the development and management (build and operate) of geotourism at the Duqm Rock Garden.
3. For local companies or international companies already registered in Oman: attach a copy of; commercial registration, the company' registered activities in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, affiliation certificate to Oman Chamber for Commerce and Industry, and affiliation certificate to the Tender Board.
4. An action plan for sustainable geotourism development and management of Duqm Rock Garden.
5. Organizational structure of the organization including detailed statements of shareholders and partners.
6. Details of previous experience in delivering and operating high quality, nature based tourism projects in environmentally sensitive areas.
7. A funding strategy to support implementation and operation of the geotourism development.
8. A plan to support and engage the community in the development of geotourism at the Duqm Rock Garden. (i.e. job creation and encouraging local products).
9. Any other documents supporting the investor in the evaluation process.

The required documentation shall be placed in a sealed envelope or package (two copies) before 2 pm on **Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018** and addressed to:

**Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) / Ministry of Tourism (Directorate General for Tourism Development)**

**The Development of Duqm Rock Garden nature-based tourism project**

**P.O. Box: 200**

**P.C: 115**

**Phone: +968 22088202**

**Email: [Mousa.AlSubeihi@duqm.gov.om](mailto:Mousa.AlSubeihi@duqm.gov.om); [yharrasi@omantourism.gov.om](mailto:yharrasi@omantourism.gov.om)**

The exterior of the envelope or package must not reveal the identity of the Bidder. The package shall be delivered by hand (for international bids, hand delivery by courier is acceptable) to the Ministry office as per the date specified in published media and on the Ministry of Tourism website.

Note: All pages of attached documents must be stamped by the company official stamp.

**Note:**

- For interested parties, the Tanfeedh initiative 1b team will organize access to the Ad Duqm Rock Garden site on 21st December 2017 at 9:00 am. For an appointment contact +968 25217714, +968 95737762, + 968 24507514.
- Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) and the Ministry of Tourism are NOT obliged to accept the “expression of interest” of any applicant.
- The application form is available at [www.omantourism.gov.om](http://www.omantourism.gov.om).

The Tanfeedh initiative 1b is aware of the significant investment of time and resources in preparing an EOI submission. In this invitation, the Tanfeedh initiative 1b has sought to minimize the financial and preparatory requirements; however sufficient information is required to ensure that appropriate geotourism projects, backed by suitably experienced and resourced entities, are shortlisted.

Applicants should assume that the evaluation panel has no knowledge of the applicant, their organization, its activities, experience or any other previous work undertaken for any organization or government agency.

<b>Evaluation criteria Stage 1</b>	<b>Criteria met Y/N?</b>
Sufficient awareness of the project	
Feasibility of action plan including support and employment of local community	
Appropriate organisational structure	
Sufficient company experience	
Feasibility of Funding Strategy	
Required documentation attached	

An indicative timeline for the EOI stage is outlined in the table below.

EOI invitation released	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2017
EOI closes	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2018
Assessment and evaluation	2 weeks
Notification of shortlisted proponents	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2018

The Tanfeedh initiative 1b will allow sufficient time for shortlisted investors to develop commercially, economically and environmentally viable detailed proposals as part of Stage 2.

Depending on EOIs received, the Tanfeedh initiative 1 team retains the right to determine whether to continue with the process.

### **Second Stage: Request for detailed proposal:**

The purpose of the RFP stage is to seek detailed submissions from shortlisted investors.

The Tanfeedh team recognizes an interactive process may assist in developing high quality, well considered proposals. This may include meetings with investors, representatives of the Tanfeedh initiative 1 team and other stakeholders.

The bidder must prepare the following documents in **stage 2**:

1. Name of the company, its full address, and title of legally authorized person.
2. **Company experience and ability to operate and maintain a natural heritage attraction.** Detailed previous experience in tourist investment, including:
  - a. List of all similar projects the company has completed or is in the process of developing within last five years in the Sultanate or any other country that has similar environment; in addition, to all currently being executed projects, including: (*Project Client, Project detailed description, contract value, provided services, execution period and deadline of the project*).
  - b. Detailed and specific description about the company' experience and potential including; classification of experiences whether (local or international); how these will be beneficially applied to the project.
  - c. Detailed plan of maintaining the natural heritage of the site.
3. The vision and concept for development must be based on best practice principles of sustainable tourism development and operational management for a sensitive natural heritage site.
4. All concepts for the site infrastructure must be environmentally friendly and in harmony with the natural values of the site.
5. **Financial Guarantees.** Statement of the company's audited budget, banking manifesto testifying capital of the company, and financial assets that prove the company's ability to invest in the project. Investors must demonstrate their capacity to deliver the concept proposal, and outline their funding strategy to support implementation and operation of the geotourism development. In addition, describe the commercial viability of the concept and how it will provide a commercial return on investment.

6. **Concept design.** This must comply with Ministry of Tourism Policy, Omani law and principles of sustainable tourism development including but not limited to conserving the cultural and natural heritage of the site including the aesthetic, geological and ecological values of the site; and prohibiting any activities that may negatively affect the environmental values of the site.
7. **Community engagement programs and job creation.** A detailed plan to support and engage the community in the development of the Duqm Rock Garden. (i.e. job creation and encouraging local products).
8. Statement that the applicant has viewed all documents and special conditions of investment cited in this document.
9. Statement confirming the accuracy of the data provided in the submitted documents and undertaking personal responsibility for the submitted data.
10. For local companies or international companies already registered in Oman: attach a copy of; commercial registration, the company' registered activities in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, affiliation certificate to Oman Chamber for Commerce and Industry, and affiliation certificate to the Tender Board.
11. International Companies not yet registered shall attach their business registration certificates from their home country and shall provide an undertaking stating that if their bid is successful they shall furnish the registration formalities in the Sultanate according to Omani laws within thirty (30) working days from such notification.
12. Any additional, documents stated in the SEZAD investment application form not listed above. Check <http://www.duqm.gov.om/>.

No.	Evaluation Criteria Stage 2	%
<b>1.</b>	<b>Conceptual Design</b>	<b>25</b>
	Understanding of the project opportunities and constraints	5
	Site plan, and creativity and sustainability of the design	10
	Site organization, including internal site infrastructure access and visitor movement	5
	Architectural design / concept	5
<b>2.</b>	<b>Community engagement programs and job creation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Ability to operate and maintain a natural heritage attraction</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Company experience in natural heritage tourism planning and design</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Financial Guarantees</b>	<b>25</b>
	Feasibility study	15
	Financial ability	10
<b>6.</b>	<b>Project Time Plan / Schedule</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

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The submission date shall be determined by Tanfeedh initiative 1b team and will depend on the process and outcomes of EOI stage 1.

### **Third Stage: Final Allocation**

SEZAD will lead the EOI process in collaboration with the:

- Ministry of Tourism,
- Tanfeedh initiative 1b team

An evaluation panel, including representatives from relevant agencies and independent external expert advisors (as required), will assess the EOI submissions. SEZAD will be the final decision maker in relation to all matters concerning the EOI stage.

SEZAD will select the best complying application within one month (30 days) after the deadline for receipt of applications and will announce the winner who must attend the Ministry of Tourism (Product Development Department) within two weeks of the date of announcement. In case the winner does NOT attend within that period, the Ministry shall select the second ranked as winner pursuant to the evaluated list of bidders.

If SEZAD has any comments concerning the winning bid, SEZAD shall require bidder responses to be completed within one month. The winning bid will be rejected if follow up comments and responses are required more than three times.

The winner will be awarded the investment and development of Duqm Rock Garden for tourism purposes according to USUFRUCT terms (to be agreed) and legal processes.



### Third: Site Information:

#### Location:

The locality is around 550km From Muscat Sahwa Roundabout. From the Roundabout drive via Fanja on the way to Izki on road 15. At Izki Junction turn left on the way to Sinaw on road 33 when reaching Sinaw Junction turn right on road 32 on the way to Al Duqm when reaching the Al Duqm junction at (N: 2174559, E: 567511) turn left and drive for 2.4km.and the locality will be at 569140, 2172861.

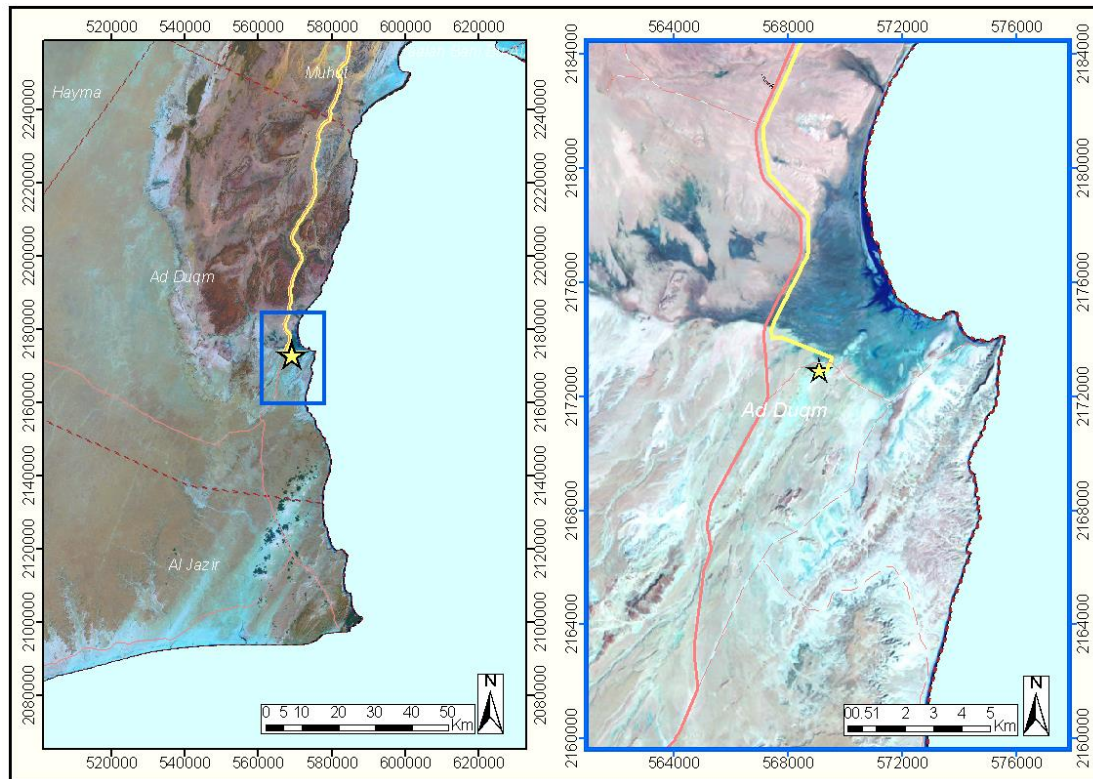


Figure: Way to the rock garden in Duqm

#### Geomorphology:

The Rock Garden is a 1.2 square kilometer area of limestone and sandstone rocks which formed in an underground freshwater aquifer over 46 million years ago. With time it has been shaped by wind, water, frost and other natural forces. This unit is normally part of the subsurface lithologies in other parts of Oman and is found at depths ranging from 200-1200m subsea. However, due to the regional uplift of the eastern flank of Oman the subsurface lithologies were exposed at surface and many were eroded. This locality is very close to the seashore and low topographic part and flooded with seawater lagoons. The shoreline is approximately 3-6 km to the East of the locality. There is minor drainage channel to the south east of the locality which is approximately 300 meters wide and drains to the lagoons located to North east. There is very little vegetation surrounding the locality apart from minor shrubs along the minor drainage channel to the south east of the locality.





Figure: Google Earth Snapshot

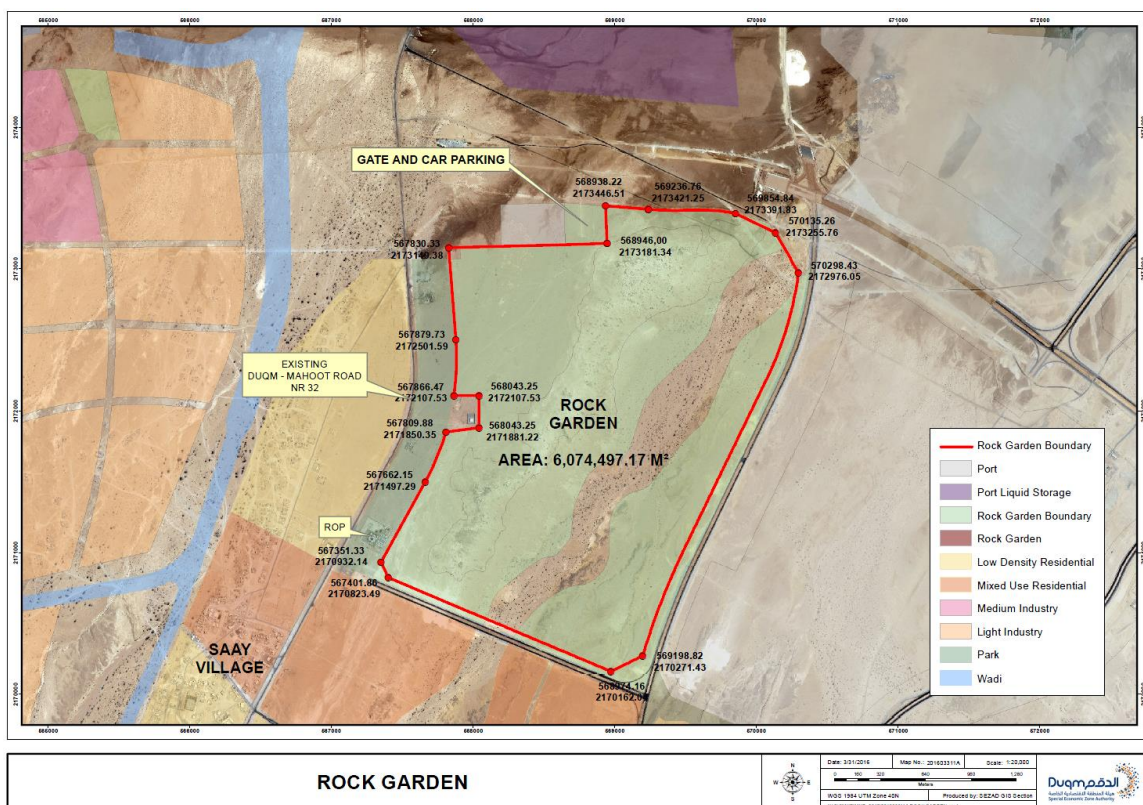


Figure: Overview of the area



Figure 1: Dimensions of the Rock Garden in Duqum

### Dimensions:

From the total 3 square kilometer fenced area, the rock garden limits is approximately 1.5 square Kilometers. The rock shapes and size is highly variable. The shapes to the northern part are taking more artistic shapes due to their bigger sizes. On average shapes are between 2-5 meters in size and 1-2 meters in height. The variation in shapes and size is attributed to differential weathering and erosion of the original limestone layers.



Figure: Various shapes of rock faces

**Summary of Tourism values:**

- ✓ Geological characteristics; rare geological feature in Oman
- ✓ Potential for diverse range of interpretive experiences to educational and tourism markets.
- ✓ The Duqm area is a site for a major development in the country.
- ✓ Opportunities for other soft or harder adventure activities as well as opportunity to link with nearby water sports, cultural and natural heritage attractions.
- ✓ Aesthetic features, impressive visual landscape.
- ✓ Employment opportunities.
- ✓ In addition to the land in which Duqm rock garden is developed, there is potential for considerate development of other natural heritage sites in Al Huqf area.