

## SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL ROADS AGENCY LTD

### ***Bridging the White Mfolozi River***

MR J RADEBE, the South African Minister of Transport, and co-host, Mr BH Cele, the Honourable MEC for Transport and Community Safety and Liaison – Kwazulu Natal, recently paid a visit to the community bridge which is currently being constructed over the White Mfolozi River.

As part of its overall ethos, SANRAL promotes the concept of "community regeneration" through all of its projects, specifically through its community development programme. Enhancing pedestrian safety, for instance, is a major priority. It is within this context that SANRAL acted without hesitation when the plight of the Qwasha community became known.

The project is taking place in the Ulundi municipal area in northern Kwazulu Natal and will link the communities that are separated by the river.

The community bridge will provide a safe passage, particularly to school children who have to cross the river. Many lives have been lost due to the hazardous nature of this activity. The structure will allow the simultaneous passage of pedestrians and vehicles, with the latter restricted to one-direction movement at a time. The bridge is a low-level structure placed at an elevation at which a one-in-five-year flood will pass underneath the deck soffit. SANRAL will also construct access roads on each side so as to link with the local provincial road network.

SANRAL promotes pedestrian safety as a major priority and it is in this context that it acted without hesitation when the plight of schoolchildren, who have to cross the river twice daily, became known. The bridge will now provide safe passage, particularly during seasonal flooding. SANRAL will also construct access roads on each side of the bridge, to link with the local provincial road network, thereby, creating employment opportunities and establishing the means to provide basic services.

The proposed bridge will span the White Mfolozi River in the Ulundi municipal area in northern KwaZulu Natal. The White Mfolozi River acts as the boundary between two traditional authorities, the amaNtombela on the northern banks (of which the closest community is called Qwasha) and the amaShandu on the southern banks (of which the closest community is called Mpungamhlope).

Presently, the Qwasha community is serviced by a district road, which directly links to Ulundi 20km away. A focal point of the community is the Nomzimanane High School. Enrolment in 2005 stood at 260 pupils, of which 60 had to cross the White Mfolozi River from the Mpungamhlope community, resulting in a total of 120 daily trips across the river.

Although served by a 10.4km community access road, the Mpungamhlope community is based 45km away from Ulundi. Direct connection with a bridge over the White Mfolozi River will result in a 23km journey.

The Qwasha community has direct access to a clinic situated in its midst. The Mpungamhlope community, however, either has to travel the 45km to Ulundi using an irregular taxi service or walk approximately 5km to the Qwasha permanent clinic by braving the river crossing.

Once the crossing is in place, development and economic benefits will most certainly follow for the communities on both sides of the river.

The contract was awarded to Blueprint Construction in joint venture with Mfheleleni, a stage four contractor to the value of R3.8 million and a construction period of nine months. The cost of supervising the project is R1.2m and this contract was awarded to Stewart Scott (Pty) Ltd. The established contractor will provide mentorship and administrative support to Mfheleleni Construction, supply required resources to complete the contract and guarantee performance security and insurance for the construction works in the name of the joint venture.

The community bridge will serve as an example of the successful convergence of social awareness and engineering strategies to the greater good of the people of our country.