

Africa Open has five big reasons to smile

Major champions Louis Oosthuizen and Retief Goosen have welcomed the news that the Africa Open will have a home in East London for the next five years.

The Africa Open launched at the Fish River Sun Country Club in 2008, but moved to Buffalo City in 2009 when Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality became one of the principal sponsors, committing to a three-year deal which came to an end this year.

The Africa Open joined the European Tour Schedule when it became a co-sanctioned event between the European and Sunshine Tours in 2010 and fast grew into the pride of East London.

Councillor Pumla Nazo's announcement the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality would be extending their sponsorship of the €1-million event guarantees that the city will continue to welcome a strong cast of international golfers and enjoy the economic benefits the tournament brings for a further five years.

"The dedication from Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality since they joined as sponsors in 2009 has been commendable," said defending champion Oosthuizen.

"Their support has gone a long way in ensuring the successful growth of the Africa Open. It's wonderful news for all of us that have grown to love this tournament, that we will be coming to the Africa Open's home for the next five years."

Nazo said the city's decision to throw their weight behind the tournament for another five years was highly influenced by the economic benefits that the Africa Open had created in East London.

"When we made our initial commitment to support the venture, we did not realise that we were creating a proud and lasting legacy for this region.

"The decision to associate ourselves with the Africa Open has paid lucrative socio-economic dividends for Buffalo City and its people. Each year, in excess of 300 jobs are created before, during and immediately after the tournament. The hospitality industry has seen a tremendous boom and each year created additional trading opportunities for formal retailers, street vendors and manufacturers of artefacts.

"We are incredibly proud to continue our association with the Africa Open."

The tournament received a further boost when the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, another principal sponsor, also pledged their support.

"We are delighted to join Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality and announce our continued support the Africa Open," said Vuyo Zitumane, interim chairman of ECPTA.

"The Africa Open is broadcast world wide and the viewership runs into the millions, offering us a fantastic opportunity to showcase and market the Eastern Cape to an international audience.

"The Department of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism, the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and all the economic development agencies in the Eastern Cape will support Buffalo City and the Africa Open."

Goosen, the champion in 2009, commended the sponsors and said this kind of commitment is exactly what the Sunshine Tour needs to continue to grow and develop.

"I think it's a win-win situation for everyone and I want to congratulate both Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality and Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency," he said.

"The Africa Open has benefited East London on an economic level, golf development has been given a wonderful boost since the inception of the Africa Open and our professional golfers have a wonderful opportunity to compete for great prize money and a chance to win European Tour membership.

"We always receive a warm welcome when we return and winning here in East London in 2009 is one of my fondest memories. I am delighted to hear that the future of the Africa Open is secure and will have a home here in Buffalo City for the next five years."