

Masindi eyes tourism growth as govt targets Kafu upgrade

BY ISMAIL BATEGEKA

KAMPALA. Plans to transform Kafu Junction in Masindi District, within the Bunyoro Sub-region, into a modern tourism stopover centre are gathering pace following the completion of a feasibility study conducted jointly by the central government and Masindi District Local Government.

The draft report by E. Marriet Consultants Limited outlines an integrated facility aimed at positioning Kafu as a key gateway for tourists travelling to western Uganda and nearby attractions, including national parks and cultural heritage sites.

If implemented, the project is expected to reshape Masindi's economic and tourism landscape. The district already serves as a major transit route to several destinations across the Bunyoro Sub-region.

According to the study, the proposed Kafu Tourist Stopover Centre will feature a motel, a tourist museum, a fuel station, a monument dedicated to Omukama Kabalega, a tourist information centre, a restaurant, and ample parking space.

Additional facilities will include a children's play area, a mini taxi park, landscaped green spaces, and upgraded market stalls to support local traders.

Masindi Chief Administrative Officer Samuel Ruhweza Kaija said the project had stood out at the national level, noting that Masindi was among only two districts whose tourism proposals were approved after a rigorous evaluation process.

"This is a major achievement for Masindi. Out of many districts that applied, only two were cleared to proceed to this stage. It reflects both the seriousness and potential of this project," Mr Kaija said.

He explained that once the feasibility study receives formal government approval, the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development will advertise the project under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.



Men roast meat at Kafu road junction in Masindi District last week. PHOTO/ALEX ASHABA

proval, the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development will advertise the project under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.

"This means private investors will be invited to develop the facility, while the government provides guidance. The private sector will bring in capital and expertise," he added.

Mr Kaija noted that the PPP model is expected to ensure efficiency, sustainability, and high-quality infrastructure capable of generating revenue for the district.

Masindi District Tourism Officer Riita Karungi said the initiative began as a concept she developed and presented to the district leadership.

She added that the idea was later refined and submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Authority, both of which supported its advancement to the feasibility stage.



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"I started this as a simple concept paper after recognising the need for a proper stopover point for tourists and travellers," she said.

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"This journey has taken years of engagement and lobbying. Seeing it reach this level is very encouraging," Ms Karungi said.

She noted that Kafu Junction's strategic location as a busy transit point makes it well-suited for tourism development.

The Masindi District chairperson, Mr Cosmas Byaruhanga, welcomed the progress, describing it as the realisation of a long-standing vision to turn Kafu into a strategic tourism hub.

"This is what happens when leaders and technical teams work together with a vision to transform a place into a tourism hub," he said.

focus. We are now closer to turning vision into reality," Mr Byaruhanga said.

He also endorsed the PPP model, saying it would enhance Masindi's visibility on the global tourism map while easing pressure on public finances.

Long-term planning

Buruli County MP Aled Ronald Akugizibwe urged stakeholders to prioritise long-term planning as the project advances.

"This is a strong initiative, but we must think beyond today. Masindi should be positioned as a competitive tourism destination in Uganda and across East Africa," Mr Akugizibwe said.

He recommended expanding the current four-acre site to accommodate future growth, including space for small-scale businesses and additional tourism facilities.

"We should not limit ourselves. If we are serious about development, we need room for expansion, especially for local entrepreneurs who will benefit from increased tourism traffic," Mr Akugizibwe added.

With feasibility studies complete and government approval at an advanced stage, focus is now shifting to attracting investors under the PPP framework.

Once completed, the Kafu Tourist Stopover Centre is expected to become a key gateway linking travellers to western Uganda's tourism circuit.

Ms Kellen Mwesigwa, a vendor at Kafu Junction, said the project would improve the travel experience by offering rest facilities, cultural information, and commercial services in one location.

She added that it would also create jobs, boost local trade, and promote Masindi's cultural heritage, particularly through the proposed museum and monument honouring Omukama Kabalega, a central figure in Bunyoro's resistance history.

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