

## RETURN THE BUSH” INITIATIVE

### BACKGROUND

Aberdare Range is located in the Central Province of Kenya. The Range encompasses natural habitats at the higher elevation and high human population density and intensive agriculture at the lower elevations. The Aberdare Conservation Area (ACA) comprises of Aberdare National Park (774 km<sup>2</sup>) and three Aberdare Forest Reserves (1,411 km<sup>2</sup>) the Aberdares, Kikuyu Escarpment and Kipipiri. The Aberdare Range constitutes one of the main water catchments area and is Kenya’s largest area of heavy rainfall. Most of the water supplies;

1. Nairobi and the surrounding districts with population of over seven million people.
2. Kenya’s hydro-electric power sourced on the Tana River which relies on Aberdare Range.
3. Agriculture (tea, coffee, floriculture, horticulture, dairy and staple food activities) within Rift Valley.

One in every 3 Kenyans is reliant on the ACA in one way or another.

ACA supports over 770 species of plants, 270 species of birds, 50-60 species of mammals. To reduce human wildlife conflict and conserve one of Kenya’s indigenous forest **Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust** has raised funds and constructed an electrified game proof fence. The fence is 400km long and construction started in 1989 and due for completion in October 2009. On completion the project will need further support for fence maintenance.

Treetops is the world famous Tree Lodge where **Princess Elizabeth** first ascended with her husband on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1952 and descended the next morning as **Queen Elizabeth II**. The Park near Treetops borders directly on to farm land hence to protect habitat and human/wildlife conflicts affecting thousands of people on the Park boundary necessitated action. **Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust** constructed an electrified game proof fence that has resolved the human/wildlife conflict and also paved way to rehabilitating the forest around the Salient and Treetops.

### PROJECT STATUS

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, **ASH** embarked on an initiative dubbed “Return the Bush”. The initiative involves the rehabilitation of the Salient Area which is (152km<sup>2</sup>) 125 Ha of Aberdare National Park an area that has been degraded by the toll the fenced in Elephant population has exerted on the ecosystem. The project 1<sup>st</sup> phase span is 5 years and was started in 2007 with 1.5 Km fence. **ASH** financed planting of 19800 tree’s covering 10Ha. Construction of 1.9M tall and 6 strand fence cost Kshs. 2.4 million. The project is to complete 10-15 Ha per year starting around the lodge thereafter embark on the rest of the Salient. Visitors to this unique game viewing lodge, the flora and fauna will all benefit greatly from this exercise. Other stakeholders in this initiative are **Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS)** and **Kenya Forest Research Institute (KEFRI)**. To support this initiative, **ASH** has a tree nursery at Outspan that covers 0.25 ha in area and have a capacity to raise over forty thousand seedlings of various species that are dominant in the Aberdare National Park. Currently it has 19 different indigenous trees of various heights and sizes, awaiting planting in the paddocks.

### TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

To support **ASH** efforts in environment conservation, we invite guests and interested parties to plant a tree in one of the paddocks. The journey starts at Outspan, where guests view the nursery before departing for a half hour drive to Treetops. On arrival guests alight and are given a guided walk to the Paddock where staff will have prepared the holes in advance. After planting the tree few minutes are allowed for photo shoot and issuance of certificates that bear clients name, name of the tree and tree number to commemorate the exercise. Clients then check in at Treetops.