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Parks body joins quest to 'rebreed' the quagga

Project boosted by commitment of financial aid

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Efforts to reintroduce the quagga, an animal that became extinct a century ago, has received a boost from the South African National Parks.

The SANP has given a commitment to finance the capture, transport and relocation costs of zebras, a close relative that might carry the quagga gene.

The last quagga in the world died in the Amsterdam Zoo on August 12 1883.

South Africa has a programme in place to try and rebreed the animal that once roamed the plains of the Karoo and Free State.

In terms of a new agreement signed with the Quagga Project Association last week, the SANP will make available certain selected plain zebras with quagga-like characteristics in

some of the national parks for inclusion into breeding groups outside these parks.

The chief executive officer of SANP, Mavuso Msimang, said besides the finances that they would provide for transport and relocation costs, they would also contribute their knowledge and expertise about the habitat of these extinct animals.

A number of project zebras have already been moved to the Karoo National Park at Beaufort West and the Addo Elephant National Park near Port Elizabeth, where selective breeding will continue in collaboration with the SANP.

The quagga project has been compared with other highly ambitious breeding programmes, such as that of the Mongolian wild horse and the Przewalski horse or the breeding of the European wild horse – the tarpan – which is under way in Poland.

