

# An Invitation to Shape What We Find

## ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

### Lake Malawi Scoping Visit

This is an invitation to shape something before it is finished — to help determine what gets built, rather than evaluate what already exists.

Ideally during the locally favorable June–July window, Bart Colen, Founder of Positive Development™, will travel to Lake Malawi for a 4–6 week scoping visit. The purpose of this brief is simple: rather than arriving at the lake and gathering what we believe will be useful to you, we would genuinely like to know in advance what you most need us to find out.

*This approach mirrors the core methodology of the Positive Development™ SME Capital Exchange: demand-pull rather than supply-push. We do not build what we hope you will want. We ask what you need — and then we go and find it*

## THE IDEA IN ONE PARAGRAPH

### Why Lake Malawi. Why now. Why this matters

When Bart Colen was ten years old, his father praised his passion for the environment — and then said something that took forty years to resolve: it will only work when it can make people money. Positive Development™ is a response to that observation. Not a compromise between ecology and economy. Not a trade-off managed carefully. A system in which a healthier lake produces more fish,

more income, more food security and more enterprise — and in which that prosperity creates the ownership of restoration that makes the cycle self-sustaining.

Lake Malawi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site holding more freshwater fish species than any other lake on earth. It is already connected to global commercial markets through the ornamental cichlid trade. It is under real but reversible ecological pressure. And it is surrounded by active local universities, NGOs and community organizations who are already enthusiastic about what Positive Development™ is bringing. The pieces exist. The scoping visit is where they begin to connect.

*Prosperity rises with protection. That is not a slogan. It is the structural logic of everything the Living Lab is designed to produce.*

## WHAT THE SCOPING VISIT WILL PRODUCE

### Four to six weeks. Real relationships. Real evidence

The scoping visit is not a research exercise conducted at a distance from the communities it concerns. On the contrary, it is the beginning of genuine, patient and meaningful co-creation — sitting with fishing and farming communities, meeting with Mzuzu University partners and other local universities, engaging with government and NGO stakeholders, beginning the ecological baseline and identifying the Vision Heads who will lead the initiative on the ground.

#### What the scoping visit will produce

**A Fully Documented Stakeholder Map** — government, NGO, university and community relationships established and recorded.

**An Ecological Baseline Initiation** — first data on lake health, runoff, agricultural landscapes, riparian zone status and fishery indicators.

**Validated Enterprise Opportunities** — specific ecology-based enterprises identified, sized and matched against confirmed commercial buyer interest.

**Community Engagement Documentation** — recorded sessions with fishing communities, farmers and local leaders establishing the human reality of the opportunity.

**Vision Head Identification** — first conversations with the Malawian domain experts who will lead the Six Visions on the ground.

**A Blueprint Pack** — a funder-ready report synthesizing all of the above into the foundation for the first serious capital raise.

**Your Specific Intelligence** — the data, insights and on-the-ground evidence that you told us in advance would be most useful to you.

## THE INVITATION

### What we are asking of you — and what we are offering in return

Our aim is to be in Malawi by June for the 4–6 week in-country scoping phase (for which we are currently assembling support: ~US\$110,000). The timing is optimal because the rainy season will have finished. The harvest will have finished. And it is before the university terms begin — creating a rare window in which communities are available and universities can engage students from day one as active contributors to the Living Lab. Thus, we are greatly interested in something that is very valuable at this stage: your perspective, your questions and your sense of what this phase would need to demonstrate in order to be genuinely useful.

This early phase is intentionally designed to ensure that any subsequent investment is well-informed, locally grounded and aligned with the needs of both communities and partners.

In practice, this means one conversation — no more than thirty to forty-five minutes. The questions we would bring to that conversation are simple:

### **The questions we want to ask you**

What would you most need to see from the Lake Malawi Living Lab to take the next step in engaging with it — whether as an investor, a commercial partner or a funder?

What specific data, evidence or relationships gathered during the scoping visit would be most directly useful to your work or decision-making?

What has made you hesitate about initiatives of this kind in the past — and what would need to be true for those hesitations not to apply here?

Are there specific enterprise types, supply chain structures or governance arrangements you would particularly like us to explore while on the ground?

What about any other questions we may not have thought of?

In return, we commit to the following: your questions will directly shape what we look for on the ground. When we return, we will report back specifically on what we found in response to what you asked. You will not receive a generic report. Instead, you will receive answers to your questions, grounded in real on-the-ground evidence.

*You are not being asked to evaluate something finished. You are being invited to help shape something still being formed — at the stage where that kind of input matters most.*

## **FOR IMPACT INVESTORS SPECIFICALLY**

### **What we will look for on your behalf**

Impact investors consistently identify the same constraint: capital is available, but investment-ready enterprises with genuine ecological grounding and community ownership are scarce. The Lake Malawi Living Lab is designed to solve that problem structurally — by building enterprises around confirmed commercial demand before capital is deployed.

During the scoping visit, we will be specifically looking at the conditions that determine investment readiness. If you tell us in advance what indicators matter most to you, we will build those indicators into the baseline from day one — so that when enterprises reach investment-readiness, the data you need to make a confident decision already exists.

### Questions we can explore on your behalf

What governance structures are the fishing cooperatives and farming communities currently using and how mature are they?

What commercial buyer relationships already exist for the enterprise types we are developing and at what stage of confirmation?

What ecological indicators show the clearest directional change in the shortest timeframe and how are they currently being measured?

What revenue-based financing structures have worked best in comparable community enterprise contexts?

### How this can support your decision-making

Community governance quality is the strongest predictor of enterprise durability. Knowing this early shapes how enterprises are designed.

The demand-pull methodology means buyers are engaged before enterprises are designed. Your knowledge of what buyers need shapes what gets built.

Ecological metrics are your evidence of impact. Knowing which ones matter to you means we instrument the baseline correctly from the start.

Capital structure shapes community ownership. Your experience of what has worked elsewhere informs how the Exchange structures its first deals.

### FOR COMMERCIAL PARTNERS SPECIFICALLY

## Building your supply chain from the ground up

The Positive Development™ SME Capital Exchange is built around a single insight that most supply chain relationships miss: the time to build quality standards, traceability requirements and governance expectations into a supply chain is at inception — not after the fact, when retrofitting is expensive and often ineffective.

The scoping visit is where enterprise design begins. If you tell us what your sourcing requirements, quality standards and traceability needs are before we arrive, we can build those requirements into enterprise design from the first community conversation. By the time enterprises are investment-ready, your specifications are already embedded in how they operate.

### **Current focus of related commercial enterprises — and what we will look for**

Verified regenerative sourcing credentials — not certification theater, but QR-linked traceability connecting your product directly to the farmer, the cooperative and the lake.

EU Deforestation Regulation and UK Environment Act compliance documentation — built into enterprise governance from day one, not retrofitted under regulatory pressure.

Supply chain stability — community-owned enterprises with genuine governance structures, not single-supplier dependencies vulnerable to individual relationships.

Premium market positioning — regenerative superfoods, sustainable aquaculture feed, ornamental fish with verified ecological credentials. Markets that reward restoration.

Your specific requirements — whatever your sourcing team needs that is not on this list. Tell us before we go and we will go looking for it.

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

#### **Lake Malawi is the first node. Not the only one**

What is learned at Lake Malawi does not stay at Lake Malawi. The African Collaborative for Positive Development™ — supported by Georgia Tech’s partnership for PD AI tool creation — is designed to make every insight, every ecological data point, every enterprise lesson available to practitioners across Africa in real time. From day one of the scoping visit, what we learn at the lake begins feeding a continent-wide learning platform.

For funders and partners thinking at continental scale, this transforms the investment thesis. A contribution to the Lake Malawi Living Lab is not a bet on one lake. It is a catalytic investment in the infrastructure of a new development paradigm across Africa — one in which the lessons of each Living Lab strengthen every other one.

*The African Collaborative means that what begins at Lake Malawi does not end there. Every community that learns to prosper through protection becomes a living proof point for the next one.*

### NEXT STEPS

#### **A simple invitation. No obligation**

If this brief has resonated, the next step is a single conversation — thirty to forty-five minutes, ahead of the scoping visit. The aim is to understand what would make this genuinely useful to you and to ensure that what emerges from Lake Malawi is grounded in the realities and priorities that matter most to you.

Whether or not you choose to engage further after that conversation is entirely up to you. There is no expectation of commitment at this stage — only the

opportunity to shape something early, before it is fully defined.

We are beginning a relationship — one we hope will deepen naturally as the Living Lab develops and the evidence it produces becomes real.

### **What happens after the scoping visit**

You receive a personalized debrief — not a generic report, but a specific response to the questions you asked before we went.

You meet — by video or in person — with our Malawian partners (perhaps with people such as Kumbukani at Mzuzu University and Daniel at AfES) who will speak in their own words about what the scoping visit produced and what it means for the communities around the lake.

You decide, with full information and no pressure, what — if anything — you would like to do next.

Whatever you decide, the relationship continues. You have asked questions. We have answered them. That is the beginning of something, regardless of what form it takes.

**This idea came looking for a steward.**

**Lake Malawi is where it becomes real.**

**WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU WITH US FOR THAT**

