

SA is on code REDZ for energy needs

Solar panels and wind turbines have sprung up like wild flowers across South Africa and by 2030 will be clustered into renewable energy development zones known as REDZes.



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The first of eight REDZes, a solar energy farm developed in a valley in the Northern Cape, has brought billions of rands in investment and jobs.

South Africa's renewable energy programme has been constrained by the complications of getting the power into Eskom's grid. But five electricity grid corridors will be created to expand access.

Department of Environmental Affairs spokesman Albi Modise said: "The identification of REDZes allows for the proactive funding of grid expansion."

Paul Lochner, manager of the CSIR's environmental management services, said the first eight REDZes were identified in areas that had the best wind and solar resources, had the highest need for socioeconomic development, and were considered environmentally robust.

The first round of identifying the zones involved expert and community consultation.

Abulele Adams, a CSIR environmental assessment practitioner, said: "In 2014, we engaged municipalities and the public in every area ... and got mixed responses.

"In Grahamstown, for example, the local government was very excited about job creation but the game farmers were worried about the visual impact of projects."

Adams is the project manager for identifying the second phase of REDZes.

In this phase sites in Mpumalanga and Limpopo will be assessed.

Kabi Solar director Mike Levington said: "We are also trying to find zones closer to areas of [power] demand, and to gold and coal mining areas in their twilight years.

"Renewable energy zones will allow us to revive collapsing mining areas, and retrain and reskill people in new jobs."

South Africa's first eight REDZes are in Upington, Kimberley and Springbok, Northern Cape; Overberg and Komsberg, Western Cape; Cookhouse and Stormberg, Eastern Cape; and Vryburg, North West.

Source: *The Times*

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