

86MW Droogfontein 2 Solar Park begins full operation

The Droogfontein 2 Solar Park situated near Kimberley in the Northern Cape, has reached full grid code compliance and commercial operation. The 179-hectare solar area (comprising over 260,000 solar panels on a single axis tracker system) is supplying 75MW (86 MW DC) into the Eskom grid.



Droogfontein

Engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractor, Juwi says Droogfontein 2 is the first of the three projects totalling 250MW it was awarded in 2018 to reach completion. The project sponsors and equity investors are African Infrastructure Investment Managers (AIIM) through its Ideas Fund, Phakwe Group, Reatile Group and Arep.

"The project team, together with our various partners, the sponsors and share holders have done an excellent job," says Greg Austin, MD of Juwi.

Senior construction manager and site manager, Nkosikhona Yeko, attributes the smooth progression to the detailed planning and scheduling of the project prior to commencement: "Our baseline approach to scheduling is to ensure that everything is done not only in accordance with our project deliverables schedule but also of course within budget.

"Our planning has ensured that we have managed the challenges of coordinating several different contractors – with a combined workforce of many hundreds of people – on site at the same time. We have succeeded in getting all the different subcontractors to work together as one team, with shared objectives."

Community involvement and benefit

Local community involvement is key to the success of the project, as indicated by Austin: "We have worked very closely with all the key stakeholders including the sponsor's community operations team and the Droogfontein Communal Property Association (CPA), who are the land owners and represent the local community interests."

The project directly employed 535 local community members, out of a total of 738 people employed, and additional employment was created through the contracting out of various services. "In effect, 2,000 individuals have been directly and positively impacted by the project, and of course there are economic multiplier effects throughout the community," said Austin.

"The Droogfontein CPA community consists of approximately 104 families. Many of the beneficiaries of the CPA have been employed on the project, as well as other people from the greater Kimberley area.

"The project is leasing 200 hectares of land from the CPA, on which Droogfontein 2 Solar Park has been constructed; the revenue from the lease for that portion of land forms part of the CPA business plan."

Continued success

"We are very eagerly looking forward to Round 5, we think the political environment is very good and it's creating a sustainable environment for us to be successful in the market.

"Solar is one big pillar, we are also active in wind – which is also equally important to us. This makes South Africa a unique market for us because it's the only international market where we do solar and wind development. We are very proud of the team here and the success we have. Given the circumstances, the political environment, we hope that there's going to be continued success and that we can provide a valuable contribution to the future energy mix of South Africa and to the local communities that we are serving with our projects," says Stephan Hansen, chief operating officer of the Juwi Group,

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