

## **Renewable energy must continue to take centre stage in energy planning**

By Tim Davidson

It is imperative that South African policymakers continue to prioritise renewable energy in future power planning, considering the major strides the country has already made in the field.

I am, therefore, encouraged by the earlier announcements by national government that large-scale “green” energy projects are still on the developmental agenda.

This announcement was also very favourably received by other participants in both the global and international renewable energy industry. It has provided the necessary reassurance of the rollout of the next phases of the REIPPP

Under the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme, or REIPPP, South Africa has become a leading investment destination on the continent for European renewable energy technology specialists.

We have worked with many of them in various capacities on prominent solar and wind projects under this programme.

I can attest to their global experience, which has been instrumental in helping South Africa introduce important clean and sustainable energy to its national grid, which still relies heavily on fossil fuels.

Importantly, there has also been significant scope for skills transfer between both South African and international players in the implementation stages of these projects.

Both European and South African participants underwent a very steep, but critical learning curve during the earlier phases of the programme.

These were important lessons that have led to further, stronger linkages between international technology companies and local developers, as well as their professional teams.

This bodes well for future planning and execution of sustainable energy projects in South Africa. We can only expect smoother implementation of these projects moving forward, starting with the much-anticipated fourth window of the REIPPP.

This window offers immense opportunity for the country to build on its “green” energy development agenda. This is considering that it involves 26 preferred bidders across a host of clean energy generation technologies, and represents R50-billion in investment into South Africa.

Importantly, it also mirrors the rich diversity of fuel sources available to South African energy planners to sufficiently diversify the country’s energy mix.

For example, this window introduces more biomass to the country's national grid, complementing the major steps South Africa has already taken in developing its capacities in solar and wind in the earlier stages of the REIPPP.

This includes those projects using wood-waste to produce electricity, or other forms of energy<sup>0</sup>.

JG Afrika has already engaged with Scandinavian investors and developers of this important base-load power. These international experts in the field have identified a lot of future potential for biomass in the country, considering South Africa's own developed and sophisticated forestry industry.

We have gained a head-start in this maturing waste-to-gas market, complementing our already proven capability in solar and wind projects in various capacities.

Keep in mind our extensive involvement in the first large-scale waste-to-energy plant in Africa that started operating in Athlone, Western Cape, earlier this year.

I remain extremely proud of our past involvement in helping South Africa secure a sustainable future that is in line with the growing international "green" consciousness.

JG Afrika looks forward to increased involvement in these projects in the country and in other Southern African Economic Development Community countries which are using the REIPPP as blueprint for harnessing their own huge "green" energy resources.

*Tim Davidson is a technical director of JG Afrika, and participated in a host of milestone renewable energy projects in the country. Some of these include !Khi Solar One, KaXu Solar One, De Aar and Droogfontein solar farms, as well as Noblesfontein, Metrowind and Kouga wind farms under the REIPPP banner.*