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JOHNSON CRANE HIRE PROVIDES HEAVY LIFTING SOLUTION FOR VESTAS WIND FARM CONTRACTS

Johnson Crane Hire's expertise in finding customised heavy lifting solutions resulted in the formation of a long-term relationship with wind turbine manufacturer Vestas. The 12-month contract entails finding and instituting the most appropriate lifting solution for Vestas' involvement in four wind farm projects throughout the Western and Eastern Cape. The wind energy projects were selected by the Department of Energy as part of the country's second round of renewable energy tenders.

Active in South Africa for 11 years, Vestas is providing wind turbines to wind farm projects at Grahamstown, Saldanha, Great Kei Municipality, Tsitsikamma and Grassridge. Johnson Crane Hire's involvement on the West Coast 1 project in Saldanha, which entailed executing the lifts for 27 of the 46 turbines, was completed at the beginning of March 2015. Not only did the company lift each of the 80 metre high 2 MW capacity V90 turbines, including the 96 ton nacelles and 13 ton blades, but it was also responsible for relocation of the crane components between each turbine pad.

The Chaba heavy lift contract in the Great Kei Municipality, adjacent to the N2 near Komga, commenced immediately after the finalisation of the West Coast 1 contract and was completed in April 2015. This project involved the lifting of seven V112 3 MW turbines, each with an installed height of 84 metres.

Cornelis Grotius says that typically for heavy lift solutions such as required by Vestas, Johnson Crane Hire would be contracted on a project by project basis. However, the company was able to offer a long term sustainable heavy lifting solution to Vestas, which was accepted in September 2014.

"It is very rewarding to be working with a company like Vestas that has a footprint of 53 700 wind turbines worldwide, effectively reducing carbon emissions by over 60 million tons of CO₂ every year."

Grotius says that the benefits of the long term lifting solution accrue to each of the parties. Vestas received preferential long-term contractual pricing, is also assured of constant service delivery levels

in-between each of the four contracted projects while each project can proceed without delay as the crane, a Liebherr 750-ton LG1750 lattice boom truck mount crane, has been requisitioned for sole use at the Vestas wind farm sites. Johnson Crane Hire benefits from the constant use of its crane over the 12-month period and the elimination of time-consuming renegotiations between contracts.

The crane, the largest machine of its kind in South Africa, is a combination hydraulic/lattice machine mounted on rubber wheels. The design of the Liebherr LG 1750 allows for easy relocation between sites with increased mobility on sites with varying terrain. Grotius says that typically crawler cranes require extensive civil works to mobilise, but this is not the case as the crane's truck mounted carrier and extendable outrigger base eliminates the necessity for this.

After the crane's arrival in the country last year, the company commenced with the training of operators who had previous experience on crawler cranes. "Together with the technical team from Liebherr in Germany, we have fully equipped two operators to operate the crane and we are currently training a further operator in a three-week intensive programme.

The successful completion of the first two contracts for Vestas can be attributed to a number of factors that include Johnson Crane Hire's extensive experience in heavy lifts; the careful attention to detail in the design, testing and implementation stages of the contract, the compilation of a thorough safety file and method statement and the investment in both fit for purpose cranes and highly skilled operators.

Grotius says that preparatory work for the two completed lifting projects was complex, with intricate lift design and planning being the order of the day. "Since each installation was undertaken in an area chosen for its constant, consistent and high-speed winds, we had to carefully calculate the effect of the wind on the lifting of each wind turbine component. Extensive rigging studies and methodologies were required not only for the shipping, but also for the building and installation of the crane. Safety of all on site during the lifts was a primary concern," he says.

VESTAS HEAVY LIFTING SOLUTION PIC 01 : Johnson Crane Hire's expertise in finding customised heavy lifting solutions resulted in the formation of a long-term relationship with wind turbine manufacturer Vestas.

VESTAS HEAVY LIFTING SOLUTION PIC 02 : Johnson Crane Hire's involvement on the West Coast 1 project in Saldanha entailed executing the lifts for 27 of the 46 turbines.

VESTAS HEAVY LIFTING SOLUTION PIC 03 : A Liebherr 750-ton LG1750 lattice boom truck mount crane, has been requisitioned for sole use at the Vestas wind farm sites.

VESTAS HEAVY LIFTING SOLUTION PIC 04 : The successful completion of the first two contracts for Vestas can be attributed to a number of factors that include Johnson Crane Hire's extensive experience in heavy lifts.

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