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MEDIA RELEASE

Wind project to inject more than R800m into local community – CEO

Call for pupils to become entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector to position SA globally

(Oyster Bay) – A little more than a year after connecting to the national energy grid, one of South Africa's first major wind farms has announced that it is injecting more than R800-million into community economic development projects over the course of its 20-year lifespan.

Kouga Wind Farm, which was one of the successful bidders in the first round of the government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP), connected to the national electricity grid in March last year.

The R2-billion development – consisting of 32 turbines each generating up to 2.5 megawatts – produces enough power to supply electricity to approximately 50 000 average South African households annually, mitigating over 270 000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually.

Chief executive Lukhanyo Ndube addressed 150 high school pupils on site this week (June 29) as part of the Department of Energy Learners' Focus Week programme. Ndube later (June 30) launched the R2.2-million programme to rebuild a crèche which was razed in a fire 2013 in the nearby Kwanomzamo community.

"A key focus for Kouga Wind Farm is uplifting the communities in which the wind farm is involved," said Ndube. "Over the course of its 20-year lifespan, Kouga Wind Farm will inject approximately R140-million in socio-economic development spending and a further R660-million in enterprise development spending on the communities within a 50km radius of the project."

To date the wind farm has spent R5.5-million on health, childcare, food security, education, sport, transport and infrastructure development in the neighbouring communities.

The wind farm also provided Sandwater Primary School in Umzamowethu with a solar-powered computer lab and assisted the Jeffreys Bay Healthy Mom & Baby Clinic with vital equipment and supplies.

Currently, 39 community members are undergoing training under the wind farm's Driver's Licence Programme, with three bird and bat monitors involved at Kouga Wind Farm having recently been awarded their driver's licences. Enabling community members to pass the gruelling learner's licence and driver's licence exams not only equipped them with the essential skill to drive, but it also vastly improved their employability, said Ndube.

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“Finding the right projects to fund is vital in order to enable Kouga Wind Farm to work towards creating a sustainable legacy in this region,” said Ndube.

Addressing the maths and science pupils, Ndube encouraged entrepreneurship.

“The South African renewable energy sector needs more local expertise – especially if the sector is to attain government’s target of supplying 42% of the country’s energy needs,” he said. “The renewable energy sector also needs entrepreneurs in order to improve technology and innovation in the industry.”

There is a vast range of job opportunities within the renewable energy sector, said Ndube. These ranged across the research and development phase; the design, manufacturing and construction phase; the operation and maintenance phase; through to the decommissioning phase at the end of each project’s lifespan.

Speaking to the importance of rebuilding the Nkqubela Crèche in Kwanomzamo, Ndube said: “Our aim is to rebuild this facility into one of the leading centres for Early Childhood Development in the Kouga region.

“The 120 children attending the crèche have been moved to a temporary facility which lacks the required classrooms and play area appropriate for a facility of this nature, so completing this project as soon as possible is vital for the community.”

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Images:

NEW LIFE: The Nkqubela Crèche in the Kwanomzamo community in Humansdorp was razed in a fire in 2013. Kouga Wind Farm has thrown a lifeline to the 120 children who relied on the crèche by announcing a R2.2-million rebuilding project, which was officially launched by wind farm CEO Lukhanyo Ndube this week. Ndube also announced that more than R800-million from the wind farm will be ploughed into economic development projects in the surrounding communities during its 20-year lifespan. (Image: Supplied)



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WIND TALK: Kouga Wind Farm CEO Likhanyo Ndube (second from right) chats to pupils from the North West (from left) Thabang Mere (19), Patience Pitso (16) and Amantle Makubalo (17) visiting as part of a Department of Energy Learners' Focus Week programme. The group were visiting Oyster Bay and the neighbouring Umzamowethu community to hear about the wind farm and the career opportunities which the renewable energy sector has to offer.



Issued by:

On behalf of:

Media contact 1:

Media contact 2:

Good News Lab

Kouga Wind Farm

Brian Hayward

brian@goodnewslab.co.za

084 250 2932 / 041 582 2684

Sharon Thompson

sharon@goodnewslab.co.za

082 378 7746 / 041 582 2684