

South African mines seek to turn up renewables to ease power crisis

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South African miners have increased their efforts to bring on new solar and wind generation, renewables company Juwi said, as they seek to cut costs and emissions and address an electricity crisis that has hit their output and the wider economy.



A wind turbine produces renewable energy outside Caledon. Source: Reuters/Mke Hutchings

Mines and their processing facilities, which account for up to 30% of the nation's power consumption, are routinely asked to reduce their use with major implications for their mineral output.

South Africa is the world's biggest producer of platinum group metals (PGMs). Sibanye Stillwater has estimated South Africa's PGM output could fall by up to 20% this year, when production from the world number two producer Russia has been constrained as a result of its invasion of Ukraine.

Juwi South Africa, a unit of the German-headquartered renewable energy project developer, has received "a wave of requests" from local mines, its Managing Director Richard Doyle told Reuters.

"This is driven partly by the energy crisis, partly by increases in electricity pricing and a strong global decarbonisation

drive," Doyle said.

He added Juwi is developing 400MW of renewable energy projects for South African mines and said energy sector reforms announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa last year, which included the removal of licencing restrictions, had given momentum to private power projects.

South African mining companies are developing a combined 6,500 megawatts of renewable power, the country's Minerals Council said. They are expected to generate 2,294MW of their own power by 2025, with more expected onstream by 2030.

Miners that have said they are pursuing renewable power include Anglo American Plc, Impala Platinum and Sibanye.

Sibanye at the end of May signed a power purchase deal with an 89MW wind project, as it aims for a target of 550MW renewable power by 2040.

It said the project would play "a pivotal role" in reducing carbon emissions as well as yielding cost savings and improving energy security.

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