

Flanagan & Gerard invests R16m to solar-power its malls

Shopping centre developer Flanagan & Gerard Property Development & Investment has invested more than R16m to install solar plants at its malls. So far, over 3MVA of solar energy generation capacity has been installed at three of its co-owned shopping centres, including Vaal Mall, Middleburg Mall, and Springs Mall.



Roof top solar panels at Springs Mall

A further solar plant for Mall of the North is expected to be live before the end of the year, and capable of generating an additional 1MVA. Added to that, Highveld Mall will introduce solar to its energy mix in early 2020, increasing the total solar energy capacity at Flanagan & Gerard's retail assets to more than 5MVA.

"Energy saving and going green are primary drivers for us, as we bring these shopping centres in line with the Flanagan & Gerard philosophy of making a positive environmental impact by using renewable resources," says Paul Gerard, MD of Flanagan & Gerard.

He adds, "Although SA is growing at a rapid rate in the alternative energy sector, we are not growing fast enough to relieve some of the pressure currently experienced by Eskom. There is uncertainty around Eskom and its ability to meet demand. We firmly believe that, as the private sector, we have a responsibility to continue to accelerate the expansion of renewable energy. The reduction of CO2 emissions is a major benefit of using alternative energy sources, and having our own independent supply comes with the added benefit of having more control over that supply."

Carport installation at Vaal Mall

Four of the centres have rooftop solar installations, while Vaal Mall has the only carport installation. "It is worth noting that since the installation, Vaal Mall's entrance five, where the carports are located, has gone from being the least used parking area and entrance to the busiest," says Gerard.

Currently, the National Energy Regulator for South Africa (Nersa) grants independent solar generation for installations up to 1MVA. Anything over this requires a generation license, and only a certain number of licenses are issued per year. Flanagan & Gerard are in the process of applying for additional licenses for their malls to ensure they can add on to current installations in future.

In future, Flanagan & Gerard has committed to designing all its new developments to include rooftops with the structural specification necessary to handle PV panel loads.

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