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Sishen Saldanha rail repairs fast tracked



By Adrian Ephraim

MINING companies are lending a hand to fix the crucial Sishen-Saldanha export line - by buying rail parts themselves and letting Transnet credit the cost against their transport bills.

This practical arrangement is part of the Ore Corridor Restoration Programme for the 861km line. It allows iron ore exporters to get essential materials much faster than the state-owned operator can through its own sluggish government tender processes.

Transnet confirmed the deal in response to questions from Cape Business News. "The assistance provided by exporters may include more speedy procurement of materials, and in such cases, reimbursement to the exporters is undertaken via offsets on existing commercial agreements," the company said.

Essentially, mining houses in the Ore Users Forum (OUF) are cutting through supply chain delays, by paying for parts upfront and getting reimbursed through adjustments on their rail contracts. They are keeping the Western Cape's vital iron ore exports moving while Transnet tackles maintenance backlogs.

Signs of progress

The hands-on approach seems to be working. Kumba Iron Ore reported that it shipped 10.2 million tons to the port in the third quarter of 2025, a 12% jump from 9.1 million tons during the same period last year.

Transnet credits the turnaround to better teamwork between its own divisions and industry partners. "This collective approach has contributed meaningfully to improved performance outcomes and reinforced confidence in the Iron Ore line's operational resilience," the company stated.

This partnership is formalised under a Mutual Cooperation Agreement, with a joint committee of Transnet and mining company representatives overseeing the work. Their shared goal, according to Transnet, is to restore the corridor to its "nameplate capacity."

A R3.4 billion boost for Western Cape rail

Alongside this private-sector help, a R3.4 billion government investment from the Budget Facility for Infrastructure is being pumped into the line. The money is earmarked for urgent upgrades to the track,



signals, and electrical systems on the route stretching from the Northern Cape to Saldanha Bay.

These repairs are critical. The line has been plagued by operational problems, including two derailments in the second quarter of 2025 alone, mostly due to broken rails. To fix this, Transnet is planning an overhaul that includes replacing nearly 800 kilometres of track—most of the line's total length—over the next four years, highlighting just how much the infrastructure has degraded over the last decade.

Chasing old records

With these efforts, Transnet is aiming to move 57 million tons of iron ore and 5 million tons of manganese through Saldanha in the 2025/26 financial year. While ambitious, this target is still shy of the line's all-time high of 59.7 million tons, set back in 2014/15.

"Improvement efforts are aimed at achieving and exceeding these numbers in the next few years," Transnet said, adding that it currently has enough trains and wagons to handle the volumes it has promised to customers.

Meanwhile, Transnet is in talks with private train operators who were recently awarded slots to run their own services on the line. Details about the routes, schedules, and cargo are still under wraps until the final agreements are signed.

Between the miners stepping in to help, a major cash injection from the government, and the prospect of new operators on the line, the plan to revive one of South Africa's most important economic corridors is finally gathering speed.

Huguenot Tunnel upgrade set for R4.5bn expansion



By Adrian Ephraim

AFRICA's longest road tunnel is about to get significantly bigger — and safer.

The South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) has confirmed that the Huguenot Tunnel, the 3.9km toll tunnel linking Paarl and Worcester on the N1 national road, is heading into a multi-year upgrade programme valued at approximately R4.5 billion. The tender for the project is currently being advertised.

The upgrade centres on commissioning a second tunnel bore that has been sitting dormant since the 1980s. When the south bore was constructed and opened in March 1988, a parallel north bore was excavated simultaneously — but never fully fitted out or opened to traffic. It has since served as an emergency escape route. That changes now.

"The commissioning of the north bore will include the installation of a concrete lining, road surface, ventilation, lighting, and modern tunnel management systems," Luphelo Ngalo, SANRAL spokesperson for the Western Cape Province told Cape Business News. "Once operational, traffic will be diverted to the north bore while the existing south bore is upgraded to the same international standards."

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R10 billion budget allocation for Belhar and Klipfontein hospitals in Cape Town

By Staff Writer

CAPE TOWN is set to get two new hospitals, following the national government's commitment to invest R10 billion in the construction of the Belhar Regional Hospital and the Klipfontein Hospital.

The funding for these hospitals was announced in the national budget last month. National Treasury said it would invest R4.6 billion in the Belhar Regional Hospital, which will have 550 beds. Meanwhile, the development of the R4.3 billion Klipfontein Hospital will see it replace the long-decommissioned GF Jooste Hospital in Manenberg.

The construction of these hospitals is part of the Western Cape government's broader plan to deliver five major health infrastructure projects. Aside from the Belhar and Klipfontein hospitals, it was announced in the 2022 State of the Province Address (SOPA) that the province also plans to build a regional

hospital in Helderberg, redevelop Tygerberg Hospital, and construct a Swartland District Hospital.

In his 2026 SOPA, Premier Alan Winde provided an update on the province's health plans and said that planning was underway for the redevelopment of Tygerberg Hospital. Winde said the Western Cape government was preparing for the redeveloped hospital, having invested R35 million in two new industrial warehouses for linen and consumables at Tygerberg. He said this would ensure "rapid and efficient material support to our hospital network".

He described this as "a once-in-a-generation undertaking that will change the very foundations of the public healthcare system in the Western Cape, and we must get it right".

In addition to the redevelopment of Tygerberg Hospital—the second largest in the country—Winde said the province had invested R2.4 billion in new and improved



health facilities over three years.

"Last year, 45 health infrastructure projects were under construction, 30 of which will be completed this year. This massive push is set to improve access to healthcare for residents across the province," Winde said.

He noted that the projects span the entire health system, from clinic upgrades and hospital expansions to specialised mental health facilities, strengthening access to care across the province.

Winde added that R255 million was being invested in the ex-

pansion of the Groote Schuur Hospital Emergency Centre, and that 63 new mobile clinics hit the road in 2025.

He said this year the provincial government would make significant progress with facilities in Hanover Park, Knysna, and Mossel Bay. "With nearly R500 million set aside for these projects, the facilities will bring health services directly to the communities that need them most."

In addition to investing in new facilities, the province has introduced new technology to improve health services. Groote Schuur

Hospital, in partnership with the University of Cape Town, is introducing an AI-powered CT brain imaging system to support faster and more accurate stroke diagnosis and treatment.

This technology enables clinicians to analyse brain scans almost instantly, improving diagnostic speed and accuracy so that treatment can begin sooner. Its ability to connect clinical teams across multiple hospitals—including Mitchells Plain, New Somerset, Victoria, and George—enables specialists to collaborate in real time.

Cape Winelands Airport project on track for 2028 opening

By Adrian Ephraim

The R8-billion Cape Winelands Airport project is progressing toward its 2028 opening target, with developer RSA Aero working through a critical construction planning phase as several regulatory milestones remain outstanding.

Spokesperson Deidre Davids confirmed the

project is on schedule. Situated on the historic Fisantekraal airfield north of Durbanville, the 450-hectare aviation precinct is targeting a construction start in Q4 2026, with detailed technical design now underway.

Partners, planning and the precinct vision

Two significant partnerships are shaping the next phase. Construction contractor WBHO has been appointed — a milestone Davids described as pivotal — while Growthpoint Properties has come on board as strategic development partner, taking responsibility for long-term property and asset management across the precinct's logistics, commercial and hospitality components.

The terminal concept is deliberately contemporary: light, open spaces celebrating the Winelands setting, a boutique building, and technology-assisted passenger processing. RSA Aero says it has received strong interest from a wide range of potential business partners and wants to work with role-players who share its commitment to first-class service.

EIA appeals and licensing decisions imminent

RSA Aero received Environmental Impact Assessment authorisation in October 2024. Of six appeals subsequently lodged, one has since been withdrawn. A ministerial decision on the remaining five is expected by end of March 2026 — an outcome that will directly influence construction timelines.

Equally consequential is the international licence application submitted in late 2024. Davids described it as a key decision with a direct correlation to the build programme, adding that the company remains optimistic the outcome is imminent. Planning and zoning approvals are also in progress.

Water, local suppliers and community engagement

The project secured its water use licence from the Department of Water and Sanitation in January 2026. The strategy includes reusing treated wastewater for irrigation, minimising consumption through design, and identifying operational efficien-



cies - a response to the responsibilities of operating in a water-stressed region.

Opportunities for local businesses span a broad value chain: cleaning, facilities maintenance, catering, retail, logistics, IT, security and professional services. RSA Aero has held information sessions with local business forums and is working with WBHO to support SMMEs in the surrounding area. Interested suppliers can register on the RSA Aero website.

The economic case for a second Cape Town airport

Positioned near South Africa's most significant tourism and agricultural export region, Cape Winelands Airport aims to enhance access for high-value tourism, business travel and time-sensitive cargo, strength-

ening links between Paarl, Stellenbosch and surrounding nodes with global markets.

Davids framed the project's purpose plainly: a second international airport for Cape Town is about securing the long-term competitiveness of the city and the country. Tourism, she noted, is a perishable product that exists in a highly competitive environment.

At this stage, the Cape Winelands Airport project is still progressing through the necessary planning, approval and funding processes, so supplier and construction-related tenders have not yet commenced.

Companies that are interested in potential future opportunities are advised to register on the supplier database using the link below. <https://capewinelands.aero/opportunities/#supp-reg>

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South Africa Sugar Industry faces import crisis



By Adrian Ephraim

South Africa's sugar industry is fighting for its life. A flood of cheap imports is threatening to gut a sector that supports over a million people in rural KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, and the future of entire communities is on the line.

"...with different industry groups now battling over whether to raise or lower this price, the future for 27,000 farmers and 65,000 farmworkers hangs in the balance."

The whole fight boils down to a complicated-sounding tariff called the Dollar-Based Reference Price (DBRP). It's basically a price floor, designed to shield local farmers from global competitors who are propped up by heavy government subsidies. But with different industry groups now battling over whether to raise or lower this price, the future for 27,000 farmers and 65,000 farmworkers hangs in the balance.

How did we get here?

Things took a sharp turn for the worse in 2024. According to Dr Thomas Funke, CEO of SA Canegrowers, the amount of sugar being imported exploded. Between January and November 2024, it jumped from around 60,000 tonnes to more than 140,000 tonnes in the same period of 2025 - a massive

136% increase in just one year.

"For every tonne of sugar that's imported, the South African industry has to export one tonne," Funke explains. "That means we're losing around R7,300 per tonne when we're forced to sell on the world market instead of locally."

The math is brutal. By November 2025,

producers compete on things like service and reliability, not just on a price they can't match.

"The world sugar price is not a fair reflection of the cost of production in any country except Brazil," Funke points out. "Brazil and India's ethanol programmes subsidise it. Almost every other country has some form of protection to make sure they have a local sugar supply."

The problem? The DBRP hasn't been updated since 2018. In that time, South African production costs - for everything from fuel to electricity - have shot up, sometimes at three times the rate of inflation. Yet, the reference price has stayed stuck at \$680.

The battle lines

In October 2024, SA Canegrowers and SASA formally asked that the DBRP be increased to \$905 per tonne, arguing it's the only way to reflect the true cost of growing and milling sugarcane today.

But in July 2025, the Beverage Association of South Africa (BevSA) hit back with its own proposal: to slash the DBRP to somewhere between \$552 and \$650. They argue that cheaper sugar would be better for consumers and drink manufacturers.

Funke doesn't mince words about what would happen if BevSA gets its way. The impact would be "absolutely catastrophic," he warns. "The industry would lose thousands of jobs overnight.

Many farmers wouldn't even be able to cover their costs."

What's at stake?

Now, the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC) has stepped in, launching its own investigation to figure out what level of protection is fair, and it's asking everyone involved to make their case.

For Funke and the communities he represents, this is about people, not just policy. "When sugar mills close and farmers go out of business, there is no other opportunity in these rural areas," he stresses. "People lose their jobs, their livelihoods, and will have to migrate to cities to try and find work."

The industry is the backbone of a vast rural area, stretching from Malelane in the north to Port Shepstone in the south. These are places with few other jobs. Each of the 12 sugar mills is a huge, complex 24/7 operation, with 11 trucks an hour needed just to keep one mill running.

A question of fairness

Funke's message to the commissioners is simple: "The level of protection has to be fair. It has to protect the industry, protect those jobs, and ensure this playing field between a very distorted world market and the local market allows businesses to thrive."

As ITAC weighs the arguments, the outcome will decide whether South Africa keeps its ability to produce its own sugar or becomes dependent on imports from subsidised global giants. For a million people in the countryside, the decision will change everything.

Want to help? When you buy sugar, check the packet. Look for "Produced in South Africa," not just "Packed in South Africa." It's a small detail that tells you whether you're supporting local farmers or just buying repackaged imports.

US Ambassador South Africa risks and opportunities

By Chris Hattingsh

FROM a purely diplomatic perspective, it is positive that the US has a new ambassador in South Africa. The ambassador provides the two countries with a high-level relational channel. When there are substantive disagreements, well-structured diplomatic channels allow them to be clearly communicated, even if not necessarily always resolved.

Under Mr Trump, US foreign policy engagements have taken on a much more transactional, quick-moving nature. This is especially true in the field of trade and investment. Adversaries and allies alike have often been caught off guard when non-trade issues have impacted trade and investment decisions in Washington.

It is against this geopolitical backdrop that South Africa ought to utilise the new US ambassador to his position's full potential, both in the short and the medium term.

From discussions with insiders, we infer that Ambassador Leo Brent Bozell III arrives in South Africa with an open mind. While he will no doubt have been issued with marching orders in Washington, he will have scope to apply his extensive skills and experience to the challenges that beset the US-South Africa relationship. Those challenges had started gathering pace well before the second administration of Mr Trump.

Mr Bozell will arrive looking for solutions. He will be much better equipped to generate commercial interest in South Africa and shift the perception of South Africa in the White House if his engagements with South Africans produce pragmatic solutions. This applies not only to strains in the US-SA relationship, but also to South Africa's domestic issues, such as

low growth, low investment, and high unemployment.

In his meetings with representatives of South Africa's government, business and civil society, Mr Bozell will ask probing questions and trigger some very uncomfortable conversations. Over the longer term, South Africa can only benefit from using such moments.

These conversations will include matters such as why South Africa condemns Israeli actions in Gaza but does not act when human rights abuses occur in neighbouring African countries. The parlous state of the SANDF and the navy's widespread inability to fulfill South Africa's maritime responsibilities will be of major concern for US regional interests.

The country's persistently low economic growth (averaging 1% from 2012 to 2023), high unemployment, and low rate of fixed investment will be a further point of discussion.

On policy, why are there consistent threats to property rights, BEE investment taxes, a reluctance to unbundle network industries and allow competition, and ever harsher employment equity policies? Why is the country's economic heartland experiencing daily water outages?

If South Africa reacts with outrage to such questions, instead of adopting radical introspection and asking whether sacred policy cows are fit for purpose and serve the interests of the people of South Africa, this will only worsen the relationship with the US. It also weakens South Africa in a global context of swiftly moving capital, where new opportunities for trade and growth emerge on an almost daily basis.

Mr Bozell will espouse an America First posture, in line with his career track record. He will be re-



ceptive to a South Africa First posture from his counterparts, one that is informed by the country's own national interest, its goals and priorities - and its view of how the relationship with the US can contribute to achieving them. Should South Africa instead revert to pleading for aid and special treatment in investment and trade - because the country "needs it" - Mr Bozell is unlikely to react with much enthusiasm.

The ANC, which maintains an iron grip on South Africa's foreign policy, seemingly enjoys its rhetorical battles with the US. But this leaves unaddressed debilitating domestic policies that make doing business more expensive, discourage capital formation and job creation, and weaken the country on the global stage.

Finally, South Africa must factor long-game considerations into its stance towards the US. It must not assume that the relationship with the US will return to "normal" after the next US presidential election.

If South Africa makes the necessary reform decisions and works with the new US ambassador in a pragmatic manner, it will set itself up well over the long term - no matter which party happens to occupy the White House.

The appointment of an ambassadorial envoy from Washington to Pretoria signals a seriousness of purpose and not a predetermined positive or negative worldview of the hosting country. The ball is now in South Africa's court.

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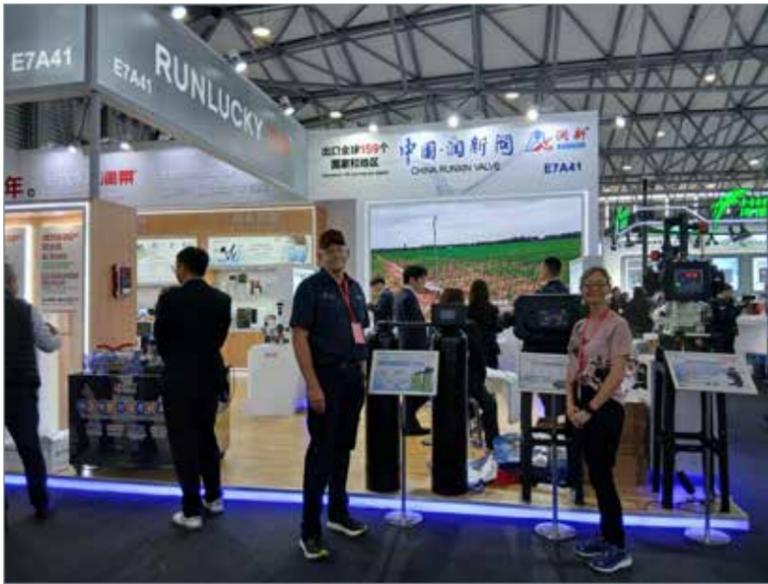
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Allmech recognised at global Runxin conference in China



Allmech - Lionel Maasdorp MD and Finance Admin Supervisor Schantell Salim at Runxin China.

ALLMECH managing director Lionel Maasdorp recently attended the Runxin International Conference in China, an event that brought together distributors and agents from 144 countries to mark Runxin's 25th anniversary and showcase new developments in control valve technology. Allmech is a leading South African manufacturer of boilers and supplier of water treatment equipment and chemicals and attends the conference annually.

strength of its global partner network. "What stood out most was the depth of the relationships," he says. "There is a real sense of trust and mutual benefit between Runxin, its management and staff, and its international agent base. During the celebrations, Runxin acknowledged its very first appointed agents who believed in the company from the beginning." During the event, Allmech was named one of just 18 agents worldwide to receive Runxin's Best Empow-

African agent and recognises the work we do in promoting their full product range, from household softeners to industrial valves, filters and ceramic core ball valves."

"Being part of a movement focused on delivering clean, drinkable water at an affordable price is important to us," Maasdorp adds.



Allmech Runxin production line.

Maasdorp says the 2025 meeting highlighted Runxin's long-standing commitment to affordable access to clean drinking water, as well as the

ered Company award. "It came as a surprise and was received with gratitude," Lionel says. "The award reaffirms Runxin's commitment to Allmech as its South

Beyond the recognition, the conference offered valuable opportunities to share insights with peers from around the world, explore best practices, and engage with new product developments. "Being part of a movement focused on delivering clean, drinkable water at an affordable price is important to us," Maasdorp adds. "Runxin continues to innovate, and with plans to expand production capacity, we expect improved lead times and new solution opportunities for South Africa and the region in 2026."

The Butterfly Effect: How Sappi's sustainability vision protects biodiversity

By Adrian Ephraim

In the mist-shrouded forests of KwaZulu-Natal, a creature no bigger than a thumbnail carries outsized significance for South Africa's forestry giant – and for every business grappling with what sustainability actually means in practice.

The Karkloof Blue Butterfly, found in only a handful of locations worldwide, is about to gain a new protected sanctuary – a nature reserve formally declared by Sappi as part of a strategy that offers a masterclass in integrated corporate responsibility. For South African businesses navigating ESG pressures, skills shortages, and a warming climate, Sappi's approach isn't just admirable. It's instructive.

Beyond compliance: The business case for biodiversity

Sappi owns approximately 400,000 hectares of land across South Africa. Of that, around 135,000 hectares – roughly 35% – is set aside entirely for conservation, not production. Eight formally declared nature reserves sit within those holdings, each carrying legal protection in perpetuity.

"If we don't very carefully look after that land, the services that the land can give us to make these trees grow better into the future – if we don't look after that, we actually won't have a business in the future," says Giovanni Sale, Sappi's Head of Sustainability for South Africa. "Looking after nature has been second nature for as long as our business has existed."

The lesson for other businesses: biodiversity assessments aren't red tape – they're business intelligence. Companies that map environmental risk early identify supply



chain vulnerabilities, water stress points, and reputational exposure before they become crises. South Africa's growing regulatory focus on environmental impact assessments means businesses that treat biodiversity as a compliance checkbox will increasingly find themselves on the wrong side of both law and public trust.

A framework that works: The four Ps

Sappi operates within what Sale describes as a "four Ps framework: principles, prosperity, people, and planet." The critical insight is integration. "Nothing that we ever do is going to be done in isolation," he explains. "Any project or task or activity that we undertake, we always consider those four items."

This is a direct challenge to the traditional corporate model. For South African businesses – particularly those in resource-intensive sectors like mining, agriculture, and manufacturing – the framework offers a practical alternative to siloed sustainability reporting. Impact matters more than spend. "Going forward, we want to put targets in place where we can actually demonstrate impact, and not do what is sort of the traditional thing – where people only speak to spend," Sale says.

The results are tangible: 834 new jobs created, 1,523 sustained, six SMEs brought into the value chain annually, and

60% of graduates from Sappi's community skills development centres placed in employment or further education. These aren't aspirational goals – they're tracked and reported against.

Endangered species, empowered communities

Sappi's Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species Programme – now propagating 22,000 plants annually across seven species – demonstrates that environmental and social returns aren't in competition. By partnering with traditional healers to cultivate medicinal plants like the near-extinct pepper bark tree (*Warburgia salutaris*), Sappi simultaneously reduced pressure on wild populations, preserved cultural practices, and created economic opportunity.

"The community benefit is that traditional medicine practitioners learn to propagate these plants themselves," Sale explains. "In many instances, we give them the plants to grow on their own land so they don't need to go into protected areas." Conservation becomes an investment, not a cost.

Climate adaptation as a competitive advantage

While most businesses focus on climate mitigation, Sappi is equally invested in adaptation. Its hybrid tree breeding programme develops drought and

disease-resistant eucalyptus genotypes, with a crucial strategic advantage.

"Climate is changing far faster than most ecosystems can deal with," Sale warns. "In the Northern Hemisphere, trees take 70 to 100 years to grow. We can cut a eucalyptus tree down within 10 years. That gives us the ability, every 10 years, to plant a tree that has been further adapted to the weather conditions that are coming down the road."

South African businesses across sectors face similar pressures. Companies that build climate adaptation into their operating models today – rather than reacting to disruption – will be better positioned to survive the decade ahead.

Sappi's sustainability strategy delivers a clear message: putting people and planet first isn't idealism – it's a durable, competitive strategy. As Sale puts it, sustainability isn't a standalone function. "There will be very few projects that we do that will be planet-related on their own. It will always consider social impact. It will always consider what it means to the company from a financial point of view."

As the Karkloof Blue Butterfly takes flight in its new sanctuary, the real question for South African business leaders is whether they can afford not to think this way.

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Why plant-based foods are more than a trend



Lake International's portfolio includes ingredients such as pea protein.

ACROSS the globe, consumers are reshaping what's on their plates. Healthier lifestyles, environmental awareness, and a desire for simpler, more transparent food choices have moved plant-based alternatives from niche to mainstream. Today, people aren't just curious about plant-based foods — they're choosing them regularly, and brands are responding with innovations that deliver taste, nutrition, and real enjoyment.

"Functional and plant-based foods are expanding across the grocery store..."

Plant-based eating is no longer just about replacing meat or dairy. Many consumers, especially younger generations and flexitarians, want meals that are nutrient-rich, creatively prepared, and aligned with their personal values of health and sustainability. This shift has broadened demand beyond imitation products to standalone plant-forward foods such as grains, legumes, vegetables, and pulses.

In South Africa and across Africa, this trend mirrors global patterns. Local shoppers increasingly seek high-protein plant snacks, fibre-rich options, and cleaner, simpler ingredient lists in everyday groceries. Functional foods with added health benefits like digestive support or immune enhancement, are rapidly moving into mainstream shopping baskets.

At the heart of this transformation are the ingredients that make plant-based products taste great, perform well, and deliver on nutrition. That's where Lake International plays a pivotal role in helping manufacturers turn consumer trends into successful products. With expertise across meat alternatives, beverages, bak-

ery, and health and nutrition, Lake International offers a range of plant-based and plant-derived ingredients and processing aids to support innovation.

Consumer expectations: Clean labels and real benefits

Modern shoppers aren't just buying plant-based for environmental reasons; they want clean labels and real nutritional value. Research shows that consumers increasingly view long ingredient lists and artificial additives as barriers to purchase. Naturalness is now one of the top priorities for plant-based food buyers, just behind health benefits.

This is where functional ingredients shine. Today's smart formulators use plant-based components that enhance taste, texture, nutrition, and shelf life without compromising clean-label intentions.

Plant-based functional ingredients & processing aids from Lake International

Lake International's portfolio includes ingredients and processing aids that are plant-based or plant-derived, ideal for plant-forward product development:

- Plant proteins: pea, soy, fava or rice proteins that boost protein content in meat alternatives, beverages, bars, and snacks.
- Hydrocolloids and natural texturisers: gums, carrageenan, and other plant-derived stabilisers that improve viscosity, texture, and mouthfeel in dairy and meat alternatives, sauces and desserts.
- Plant-based fibres: soluble and insoluble fibres, supporting digestive health while improving texture and moisture retention.
- Plant-derived emulsifiers: lecithin from sunflower or soy

helps blend water and fat for smooth, creamy textures.

- Plant-based natural flavour enhancers: botanical extracts that enhance taste and target personalised nutrition while keeping labels clean.
- Processing aids from plant sources: natural starches, fibres, and hydrocolloids that support production efficiency, texture stability, and shelf life without introducing synthetic additives.

These ingredients allow manufacturers to deliver the taste, texture, and nutrition consumers expect while keeping products aligned with plant-based and clean-label trends.

Functional and plant-based foods are expanding across the grocery store, from high-protein breakfasts and dairy alternatives to innovative snacks and beverages with added vitamins, minerals, or botanicals. The most successful brands today simplify ingredient lists, focus on recognisable plant sources, and employ plant-based functional ingredients that deliver real benefits.

Partnerships with expert suppliers like Lake International ensure that innovation is practical and scalable, from concept through to shelf, helping brands create products that satisfy both consumer expectations and commercial needs.

Plant-based foods are here to stay, driven by consumer demand for health, taste, and sustainability. With the right combination of plant-based proteins, fibres, hydrocolloids, emulsifiers, and functional ingredients, the next generation of plant-based food will be even more compelling — tasting great, delivering nutrition, and winning over a broader range of consumers every day.

How to build a profitable fleet: Pre-owned trucks, TCO and smart fleet planning

AS transport operators navigate rising fuel costs, regulatory pressure and increasing payload demands, fleet strategy has become more critical than ever. According to Mark Gavin, Sales Director: DAF Trucks at Babcock, sustainable growth in transport is rarely driven by chance - it is driven by disciplined fleet planning.

"Many operators enter the market with quality pre-owned units to manage capital exposure," says Gavin. "That's often a smart and strategic starting point. The key is ensuring those vehicles are properly inspected, supported and backed by a strong aftermarket network."

Starting smart

Pre-owned trucks can offer a lower barrier to entry, allowing businesses to establish themselves while preserving working capital.

However, as operations mature and payloads increase, fleet conversations shift.

"We see a clear transition point," Gavin explains. "Once operators begin running heavier combinations or expanding into longer routes, the focus moves beyond purchase price to total cost of ownership."



Scaling with the right specification

Higher-horsepower units allow operators to move increased gross combination masses efficiently - but power alone is not the answer.

"It's about balance," says Gavin. "You need the right combination of power, fuel efficiency and reliability. If you get that balance correct, you protect margins while increasing capacity."

Modern driveline technology and optimised aerodynamics now enable higher output without disproportionate fuel penalties - a critical factor in long-haul and bulk transport operations where fuel remains a primary cost driver.

Looking at lifecycle value

For Gavin, the total cost of ownership re-

mains the central metric in fleet decision-making.

"Capital cost is important, but it's only one part of the equation. Fuel consumption, service intervals, parts availability, warranty support and residual value all influence long-term profitability."

Operators who plan with lifecycle value in mind typically benefit from improved asset sustainability and stronger resale performance.

The human element

Fleet performance is not only mechanical - it is human.

"Driver comfort plays a direct role in safety, productivity and retention," Gavin notes. "Ergonomic cabs, intuitive layouts and reduced fatigue contribute to operational consistency. In a competitive driver

market, that matters."

Modern trucks are designed not only for performance, but for the well-being of the people who operate them daily.

A partnership approach

At Babcock, fleet planning is approached as a long-term partnership. "Our role is not simply to supply trucks," says Gavin. "It's to work alongside operators - whether they are starting with pre-owned assets or scaling into higher-capacity units - and ensure their fleet decisions support sustainable growth."

As transport businesses face continued economic and operational pressure, a disciplined fleet strategy becomes a competitive advantage.

"Fleet growth should never be accidental," Gavin concludes. "It should be engineered."

John Thompson re-establishes Australian presence through EDMS partnership

JOHN Thompson Industrial Watertube Division, part of the AC-TOM Group in South Africa, has announced a new partnership with Australian firm EDMS to reintroduce its world-class industrial solutions to the Australian market. The collaboration restores access to specialist boiler support for the sugar industry and opens new opportunities in the energy and industrial sectors.

Rebuilding a historic presence

John Thompson's long history of engineering excellence dates back to 1824. Although its Australian division closed in the early 2000s, many of its boilers remain in operation across the country.

With limited specialist support available in recent years, this partnership restores access to original parts, expert maintenance, and technical upgrades.

"John Thompson is proud to be back in Australia," says Quintus Engelbrecht, Business Development Manager of the Industrial Watertube Boiler Business Unit. "By working with EDMS, we are providing long-overdue access to the level of service and technical expertise our equipment requires."

EDMS provides a diverse range of engineering, fabrication and site construction services to the sugar, agriculture, defence, marine, resource, renewable energy, tourism and industrial sectors. It has built a solid

reputation in the Australian sugar industry through its maintenance work and strong technical capabilities. By aligning with John Thompson, EDMS is now equipped to deliver a complete offering - from site support to project execution.

Service where it matters most

"There are very few boiler specialists left in Australia," explains Engelbrecht. "With this partnership, we combine our engineering knowledge and equipment supply with EDMS's strong local footprint."

Australian clients will benefit from enhanced access to engineering insights, specialist services, and spares, including the potential for

remote monitoring and virtual diagnostics, improving plant reliability and efficiency.

Supporting more than sugar

While the sugar sector is the immediate focus, John Thompson sees strong potential for its boiler systems in other industrial applications, including power generation.

"We're excited to align with a partner that opens doors to smarter, more efficient energy solutions for the Australian industry. With John Thompson's proven technology and our local delivery footprint, clients can expect real performance improvements," concludes Michael Hagen, EDMS Australia Managing Director.

How Bühler Cape Town is raising the bar in the region



By Adrian Ephraim

THERE was a time, not long ago, when Bühler's Cape Town operation was earmarked for reinvention. Profitability was challenging, and the future of the service station looked uncertain. That story has since been rewritten entirely.

“The expansion allows us to both service more customers and provide extra services, including the refurbishing of Bühler-manufactured machinery to Bühler standards,” says Barris.

Marc Barris, Bühler Southern Africa's Technical Adviser, describes the turning point openly: “When we started in Malmesbury and later moved to Klapmuts Gardens, we faced the challenge of not being profitable. Through our commitment and focus, we have transformed this service station into what it is today.”

In its fourth year at its current premises, the Cape Town facility is a recognised centre of excellence within Bühler Southern Africa. Workshop foreman Hugo Bruwer, who has been part of the rebuild almost from day one, captures the shift simply, “Cape Town has now firmly established itself. Where the facility was once largely unknown, it has become a site that many are keen to visit and see firsthand.”

Expanding to meet growing demand

The facility is currently undergoing a significant expansion. The workshop is being re-configured for a logical production flow. Dedicated incoming and outgoing doors, overhead crane capability, and the capacity to handle Bühler's latest TVM (Temperature and Vibration Monitoring) milling rolls. Once complete,

the Cape Town centre will be the only facility in Africa able to refurbish TVM rolls.

The numbers reflect the momentum. The facility has already refurbished 380 milling rolls this year, a figure set to double when the expansion is fully operational. “The expansion allows us to both services more

customers and provide extra services, including the refurbishing of Bühler-manufactured machinery to Bühler standards,” says Barris.

Quality at the core

Milling rolls, the cylindrical components with fine spiral flutes that Barris calls “the heart of the mill”, are the facility's primary focus. The workshop grinds, and flutes rolls up to 2.1 metres in length, producing full-quality control and release documentation for every unit. Alongside rolls, the team services dies, the perforated rings, used in animal feed pellet production.

The team overhauled the facility's ISO 9001

quality system after study visits to manufacturers in Germany and China, tightening tolerances and systematising training. The facility achieved ISO 9001 certification in record time and recently passed its RMA Safety Audit with a score of 98%.

The impact is clearly reflected in customer behaviour. “I recently asked one of our key clients why their roll orders had decreased,” Barris recalls with a smile. “He explained that the quality has improved to the point where they simply do not need to replace the rolls as frequently. In a way, we have reduced our own repeat business, but that is exactly the kind of feedback we want to hear. It confirms that we are delivering lasting performance and real value.” This response, Barris adds, is a strong indicator that the workshop's focus on precision, quality control, and consistent standards is delivering tangible benefits for customers while reinforcing long-term trust in the service provided.

Bruwer is candid about the competitive landscape: “While some competitors may offer services at a significantly lower cost, our customers face the risk of working with providers who lack a deep understanding

of the milling environment. We have the expertise to optimise mill performance, and we know that the rolls are at the heart of that process.”

Innovation, solar, and staying the course

The workshop's culture of continuous improvement runs deep. When the team identified that their MRBB grinder's 1.8-metre bed stroke could not handle longer rolls in a single pass, Bruwer proposed extending the hydraulic cylinder, a modification executed with SSM Hydraulics that cut a full day off the processing time per roll. A Wi-Fi timer switch now activates the machine's hydraulic system at 4am each morning, so it is at operating temperature when the team arrives at 7am.

The facility has also operated entirely on solar power for 11 months. With 80 panels, 230 kW of generating capacity, eight lithium batteries, and four inverters, the workshop has not purchased a unit of electricity since commissioning the system. “We have never missed one deadline,” says Barris. “That is an attribute to this team.”

Barris is clear that the journey is far from over. “It is not as if we have reached a point and now we pause. We are constantly developing new ideas, new ways to make things more efficient, better quality. New technologies are coming, new customer requirements, we look at ways of doing it better, more affordably, and more efficiently. We are constantly evolving.”

For Bruwer, the measure of what has been built here is personal: “Looking back at where we started and seeing what our Cape Town station has become today is, without a doubt, what I am most proud of”.



Sasol gas extension fails to solve gas cliff



By Staff Writer

THE move by Sasol to continue supplying gas beyond its June 2028 deadline and into June 2030 does not avert the “gas cliff”, says Industrial Gas Users Association of Southern Africa (IGUA-SA) executive officer Jaco Human.

Sasol announced in November that it would supply local industry with Methane Rich Gas (MRG) from its Secunda operations to external customers for a limited bridging period from July 2028 to June 2030.

“This initiative forms part of Sasol's broader strategy to safeguard the gas market and enable a smooth transition to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as a long-term solution,” the company said.

“Together with the gas aggregator in place, we believe we can move forward. The problem is, right now, we don't know where the government stands. That is unclear to us.”

Sasol's announcement followed growing concerns that if no arrangements were made to secure supply, industries that directly employ 70 000 people and contribute between R300 billion and R500 billion annually to the economy would be severely affected.

Human welcomed the announcement but said it only gained time for the industry to come up with alternative arrangements, noting that the fundamental issue of security of supply remained unresolved.

He said that, as part of the association's own efforts to secure supply, some of IGUA-SA's members had established a gas trading platform company, or aggregator, in November to buy gas.

“This is a company owned by large industrial gas users. It's an open-access platform for small, medium, and large enterprises to participate in. The purpose is to pool volumes to enable upstream projects for gas supply and infrastructure development,” Human said.

The idea is for the aggregator to use Mozambique as an entry point for the gas.

The problem, he said, is that despite the commitment of large industrial users, industrial demand is too small to underpin the infrastructure investments needed.

The way to bolster demand is to have players in the energy sector, like Eskom, Sasol, and Independent Power Producers (IPPs), sequence their demand to create a “demand stack” large enough to secure infrastructure financing and development.

Human said the overall solution lay with the government, as it needed to provide fiscal guarantees to enable investment in infrastructure. What the government plans to do, however, remains unclear.

“Together with the gas aggregator in place, we believe we can move forward. The problem is, right now, we don't know where the government stands. That is unclear to us.”

For its part, Sasol

said it remained committed to supporting the South African industrial gas market. “The MRG solution provides a critical supply bridge while LNG infrastructure is being developed, and we are engaging customers to ensure alignment on this approach,” said Dumisani Bengu, Senior Vice President: Marketing & Sales Energy at Sasol Gas.

The group pointed out that the successful implementation of the MRG solution was subject to regulatory approval of Sasol Gas's Maximum Gas Price (MGP) application to the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA).

The MGP would reflect the cost of acquiring MRG from Sasol South Africa, the producer, and would be determined in accordance with NERSA's pricing methodology.

Sasol said it had initiated discussions with NERSA to ensure a fair and transparent process that supports economic viability for both the producer and the trader.

Sasol is currently engaging with customers to discuss the proposed MRG solution, assess infrastructure compatibility, and confirm volume requirements. These engagements will inform the final investment decision (FID) for the necessary modifications to enable MRG supply.

Sasol continues to advance its LNG strategy in parallel, with multiple terminal options under consideration to meet long-term gas demand in both inland and coastal regions.

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Samsung addresses socio-economic challenges faced by country's youth



Top graduates of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Software Development (SWD) Programme sponsored by Samsung.

STUDENTS from the fifth Cohort of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Software Development (SWD) Programme sponsored by Samsung, were recognised at a graduation ceremony held in February. The aim of Samsung's SWD programme is to address youth unemployment and promote inclusivity for underserved communities in the technology sector.

reaches the conclusion of its second phase, its achievements are remarkable and transformative. Over the past six years, the programme has empowered its beneficiaries with comprehensive training in cutting-edge software development technologies. Participants have gained proficiency in high-demand coding languages, software architecture, web and

addressing the lack of female software developers in the industry and this has resulted in 51% female representation in the programme to date.

Lois Dippenaar, Institutional Planner at UWC said: "This collaboration with Samsung demonstrates the real impact that industry-academic partnerships can have on social mobility and inclusive innovation. Our graduates leave this programme with practical experience, professional networks and a strong sense of purpose to shape South Africa's digital future."

The FIL aims to provide an opportunity to deserving previously disadvantaged youth (18-35) and equips students not only with strong foundations in software development and digital social innovation, but also with the advanced skills needed for emerging careers in AI and data-driven software development.

Through its work-integrated learning streams and close collaboration with industry, the FIL highly contributes to graduates' readiness for the rapidly evolving AI and technology landscape.

In addition, the Western Cape CoLab - an applied research unit at UWC which manages the FIL - complements this skills pipeline with research, policy engagement and applied projects on digital inclusion and technology governance.

Speaking at the event, Nicky Beukes, Samsung South Africa EEIP Project Manager added: "Through this partnership with UWC, we are not only equipping young people with in-demand technical skills, but also helping them build the professional confidence and workplace readiness required to succeed in the digital economy."

Towards the end of the 10-month programme, students from this graduating cohort presented their projects, showcasing technology solutions addressing real-life problems or improving systems for greater efficiency.

By designing apps and utilising the skills and knowledge gained throughout the programme, they demonstrated innovative approaches to solving challenges.

Beukes concluded: "Together with our partners, our continued commitment to ICT Education and youth empowerment allows us the opportunity to strengthen our focus on uplifting local communities by providing access to ICT training and skills development programmes - ensuring that individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds can thrive in the technology sector."

For further information, please contact Johana Mogoeng, Samsung Electronics South Africa.

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Nicky Beukes, Samsung South Africa EEIP Project Manager.

"...Through this partnership with UWC, we are not only equipping young people with in-demand technical skills, but also helping them build the professional confidence and workplace readiness required to succeed in the digital economy."

According to the Western Cape Government: "Despite having the lowest unemployment rate in the country, the rate remains high (18.1% to 19.6% as of 2025/2026), indicating a need for even more job creation". This is one of the reasons why Samsung continues to be committed to investing in ICT education within the communities it serves; it's the company's way of trying to assist both the province and the country to overcome the youth unemployment challenge.

The 35 graduating students are part of the Future-Innovation Lab (FIL) at UWC. Established in 2019 through a multi-year partnership with Samsung, the FIL creates pathways for young people to thrive in the digital economy through advanced training, applied research and inclusive innovation.

As the programme

The March Momentum Test

When first-quarter ambition hits operational pressure head on in March

JANUARY is strategy. February is reality. Hmmm... March?

March is the Momentum Test. This is where beautifully crafted, ambitious PowerPoint slide decks collide with budget constraints, ongoing people dynamics ... and that one project that "just needs a quick tweak", which is never ever quick.

I call it "March Madness", because by March:

- The excitement of what lies ahead has worn off.
- If Q1 hasn't been bumper, the 2026 stretch targets suddenly feel like a far too ambitious stretch.
- The calendar looks like Tetris. No white space. No time to think.
- Your energy, and your team's energy, looks very different to that sparkly January jump-for-joy version.

This is the month where 2026 momentum either gains lift-off, or starts looking decidedly limp. So how do you make the March shift? The March Momentum Test is not about ambition. It's about execution under pressure.

January runs on motivation. March must run on operational stamina, because suddenly everything looks urgent. And urgency is where clarity goes to die. So let's get practical.

1. Stop expanding. Start narrowing.

In March, leaders add.

- Add meetings.
- Add initiatives.
- Add "while we're at it..."

No. Momentum does not come from expansion. It comes from disciplined narrowing. Ask yourself:

- What were the three non-negotiables for Q1?
- What can wait until Q2?
- What is distraction disguised as importance?
- If everything is critical, nothing moves. Momentum needs a lane. Stay in it.

2. Audit decision fatigue

By now, you have made hundreds of decisions.

- Micro-decisions.
- People decisions.

• Budget decisions
Decision fatigue creeps in quietly. When leaders are cognitively overloaded, they:

- Default to safe choices
- Avoid hard conversations
- Delay important calls
- Or snap under pressure

Install decision windows.

Batch strategic decisions into a protected 60 to 90 minute block each week. Face-to-face meetings if possible. Not on email. Not on WhatsApp.

Clarity is a leadership asset. Guard it like you would revenue.

3. Re-energise the middle layer

By March, executives are pushing. Frontline teams are grinding. Middle managers are stretched. And when the middle wobbles, execution wobbles.

Instead of another strategy reminder, ask every manager:

- What's slowing your team down?
- Where is there confusion?
- What decision/s are you avoiding?

March is not about more motivation, it's about removing friction. Momentum builds when friction drops.

4. Shift from firefighting to intentional designing

March exposes whether you are managing the day or designing the quarter. Firefighting feels productive. Designing feels slower, but it compounds.

At the end of each week, ask:

- What did we genuinely move forward?
- What did we merely manage?
- What needs re-designing?

If Q1 ends in survival mode, Q2 begins exhausted. Write this on a Post-it Note and stick it on your desk.

5. Guard energy like revenue

Ambition without energy collapses. Energy erosion is subtle.

- Shorter tempers.
- Longer meetings.
- Less laughter.
- More "just get it done".



Joni Peddie
CEO: Resilient People.

This month:

- Start meetings on time.
- Shorten meetings by 10 minutes.
- Celebrate visible progress at work. The odd cake and sparklers are a very simple idea.
- Prioritise your sleep. Sleep is the foundation for wellbeing and energy. It is a Superpower.

Momentum is emotional as much as operational.

The "Real Question"

Here's the March Momentum Test in one line:

Are we building sustainable traction, or just running faster?

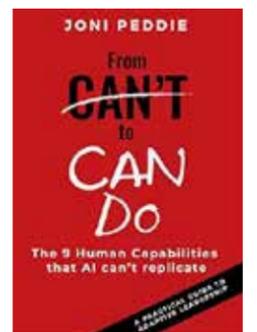
Speed without alignment creates chaos. Clarity plus disciplined execution creates compounding progress.

By 31st March you should feel one of two things:

1. We're on track and it's manageable; or
2. We need a reset.

If it's the second one, that's not failure, that's leadership awareness. And awareness is always the first lever of momentum. March Madness isn't about how hard you push. It's about how intelligently you focus, because when first-quarter ambition meets operational pressure, the busiest leaders don't win. The clearest thinking ones do.

Mental clarity is the antidote to March Madness.



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Is your warehouse smart, sustainable and skills-powered?



Warehouses play an important role in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies.

SUPPLY chain industry body SAPICS is urging African businesses to rethink how they view warehousing – and to recognise it as a strategic driver of growth, resilience and competitiveness, rather than a passive cost centre.

For decades, warehouses across much of Africa have been treated as simple storage facilities – under-invested, operationally basic and largely absent from boardroom strategy. But this mindset is shifting globally. According to SAPICS, businesses that fail to modernise their warehousing, risk falling behind in an increasingly complex and competitive supply chain landscape.

As geopolitical tensions, nearshoring and shifting trade routes reshape global commerce, Africa has a window to position itself as a regional and international trade hub. However, unlocking this opportunity requires investment not only in ports and transport corridors, but also in modern, efficient and sustainable ware-

housing supported by skilled talent.

Warehousing is no longer a passive function. Decisions around location, capacity, layout and technology now influence speed to market, supply chain flexibility and resilience in the face of disruption. In an era of just-in-time delivery, omnichannel retail and complex cross-border supply chains, the warehouse has become a strategic lever.

Sustainability is also rising on the agenda. Warehouses play a critical role in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies, directly affecting energy use, carbon emissions and operational costs. Poorly designed or inefficient facilities can undermine sustainability goals, while smart warehouses can significantly reduce a company's environmental footprint.

Operational performance remains fundamental. Effective warehouse management ensures the right goods are available in the right quantity at the right time, stored safely

and delivered in optimal condition. When warehouses underperform, the consequences ripple across the supply chain – impacting customer satisfaction, cash flow and business reputation.

These pressures are intensifying as consumer expectations evolve. Customers increasingly expect faster delivery, customised products and full transparency. Many African warehouses, however, still face inefficiencies in layout, processes, systems and skills that limit their ability to meet these demands.

Market data highlights the growing importance of warehousing. In key African cities such as Johannesburg, Nairobi and Lagos, occupancy rates for modern warehouse facilities have risen to around 85%, with rental growth reflecting strong demand. This points to both opportunity and a shortage of quality, fit-for-purpose infrastructure.

Globally, the strategic value of warehousing is also gaining recognition. The DP World Global Trade

Observatory Annual Outlook Report 2026 found that logistics executives rank warehousing and logistics hubs as the top priority for infrastructure investment, underscoring their central role in trade competitiveness.

One of the most significant – and often underestimated – pressures on warehouses is reverse logistics. The growth of e-commerce across Africa is driving higher return volumes, with global benchmarks showing that up to 40% of online purchases in some categories are returned, compared with 5% to 10% for in-store purchases. These returns require additional space, labour and systems for inspection, repackaging and redistribution.

For warehouses not designed to handle reverse flows, this creates congestion, higher costs and operational complexity. Flexible layouts, smart design and digital tracking systems are increasingly essential to manage both inbound and outbound flows efficiently.

Technology is only part of the solution. SAPICS emphasises that skilled people are critical to unlocking the full value of investments in automation, AI-enabled warehouse management systems and data analytics. Today's warehouse professionals need a combination of operational expertise, digital skills, problem-solving ability and an understanding of sustainability principles.

To help address the skills gap, SAPICS offers targeted training programmes for warehouse staff at all lev-

els. Its Basic Stores & Stock Control course provides a practical foundation in warehouse operations, helping organisations improve accuracy, efficiency and control.

Sustainability is another key focus. While supply chain discussions often centre on raw materials and transport, reducing energy consumption in warehouses is one of the most immediate and controllable ways to cut emissions. Energy-efficient facilities can lower costs while improving environmental performance – a critical consideration in regions such as South Africa, where energy constraints and rising electricity costs are ongoing challenges.

SAPICS also provides advanced training in sustainable supply chain practices, including programmes developed in partnership with the Association for Supply Chain Management and International Supply Chain Education Alliance, equipping professionals to design and manage greener supply chains.

Warehousing in Africa is at a turning point. Rising demand, evolving trade dynamics and shifting consumer expectations are reshaping the sector. According to SAPICS, warehouses that remain under-invested risk becoming bottlenecks that constrain growth. Those that are smart, sustainable and skills-powered, however, can become powerful enablers of economic development, business success and job creation.

THE BOTTOM LINE

South Africa business incentives cost over R1 billion per job



IF you ever visit an industry expo, do yourself a favour and ask any of the exhibitors what kind of state support they are getting for their home-grown inventions.

Just after they tell you that it has taken them three to five years to develop this technology, that it requires specialised equipment to make it, cost them millions to set up, and enabled them to export their one-of-a-kind products around the world, they will break into a resigned grin when asked about using the government's incentive programmes.

They will tell you that the incentives are too onerous to access and don't provide the type of support they need.

The problems with the government incentive programmes were inadvertently highlighted in the national budget released last month. In the medium term, the state had put in place business incentive programmes worth R18,9 billion to create 18,000 jobs. Put another way, running the programmes will cost the taxpayer over R1 billion per job.

To his credit, National Treasury official Duncan Pieterse said the government incentive programmes would go through a long-awaited and much-needed review this year.

Once the review commences, Pieterse and his staff should consider reading the 2018 Report on the Evaluation of Government Business Incentives.

Published by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, which sits in The Presidency, it noted that while the country spends billions of rands a year on an elaborate mix of business incentives that cut across multiple departments and sectors, insufficient attention is given to the rationale and design of new incentives, and the monitoring and evaluation of existing pro-

grammes.

In effect, as a whole, the government is not assessing the impact of its existing incentives or determining what new ones need to be introduced.

The report also pointed out that a large part of the incentive system is oriented towards sustaining mature industries and protecting workers in existing companies, rather than facilitating new entrants or technology diffusion.

In other words, the incentives are trying to protect jobs and well-established industries rather than create new jobs and develop new sectors.

The Automotive Investment Scheme, for example, supports the 115,000 workers in the South African automotive industry, but there have been calls to eliminate taxes on electric vehicles (EVs) as a way to foster the local EV market.

But let's take a step back and ask why we need incentives in the first place. They are there to give businesses and industries a boost because, despite their potential, there is not enough support for their products in the market. The hope is that with some state backing, these businesses will eventually develop a market for their products.

The exhibitors at the expos are not getting this. They are developing products and markets at great risk and tremendous cost, with little, if any, support from the state.

We hope that those conducting the review of the incentive programmes will find time to go to industry expos and speak to the companies there, to get a better understanding of the support they need.

The bottom line is that it is noble that the government is trying to save jobs by protecting mature industries, but if we want to get the economy going, more support has to be given to emerging sectors.

Cape Town CBD business confidence hits record high as entrepreneurs back city's growth

BUSINESS confidence among Cape Town CBD entrepreneurs has reached an all-time high, with 97.8% of surveyed business owners reporting positive sentiment in Q4 2025 – the strongest reading since the post-Covid recovery period.

The figures, drawn from the Cape Town Central City Improvement District's (CCID) latest Business Confidence Survey of 297 business owners, show confidence climbed steadily through the second half of 2025, up from 96.2% in Q3. More than 86% of respondents said overall

business conditions improved over the past year, while 86.9% expected their businesses to grow in 2026.

CCID CEO Tasso Evangelinos attributed the sentiment to a resilient entrepreneurial culture taking root in the inner city. "Businesses in town continue to demonstrate resilience, innovating and reimagining themselves to remain relevant – and they're confident about the year ahead," he said.

The survey points to small business owners as a key driver of the CBD's economic momentum. Colette

MacLennan, owner of Bree Street eatery The General Store, has grown her team from four to 12 employees over a decade and recently expanded by opening a production kitchen on Roeland Street to scale her catering operation. "No day is ever the same, but our offering of fresh, healthy meals is consistent," she said.

Richard Lemkus, whose family sneaker retail business dates back to 1935, is also investing in the CBD's future, converting a St Georges Mall kiosk into a new food concept, Jack's Burgers.

"We believe in the future of the CBD – not just as a business location, but as a cultural and creative hub," Lemkus said, noting nearby developments including the Mutual Building redevelopment and the planned Golden Acre overhaul as signals of broader momentum.

Despite ongoing challenges around competition, operational pressures and access to finance, 23.4% of surveyed business owners said they planned to introduce new products or services in the year ahead – a sign that adaptation rather than

retrenchment is the dominant response.

Both MacLennan and Lemkus credited the CCID's visible security presence, urban management and street maintenance as foundational to their ability to operate and invest. "The CCID plays an important role in creating a functional foundation for businesses like ours," said Lemkus.

With record confidence levels and active investment from established players, Cape Town's CBD is entering 2026 with its strongest entrepreneurial outlook in years.

Smart Density Monitoring boosts crude oil separation efficiency

IN the remote Rajasthan desert of northern India, Cairn Oil & Gas, Vedanta Ltd., is pushing the boundaries of crude oil production. At the heart of their operation is a reliable, low-maintenance density measurement system from VEGA that's helping them get the most out of every barrel, starting right at the slug catcher.

Crude oil separation starts early in the process, and one of the key pieces of equipment is the slug catcher. This vessel handles "slugs" - sudden bursts of liquids in the pipeline - and separates oil, water, gas, and solids before the crude moves downstream. For Cairn, getting this step right is vital. That's where VEGA's radiometric density technology comes in.

This smart density profiling is part of Cairn's wider push to extract more value from existing assets.

Cairn uses a vertical array of VEGA's MINITRAC 31 sensors to monitor the entire density profile in the slug catcher. Ten measuring points along the vessel give a live picture of how separation is progressing, allowing operators to respond to changes in real time. This helps prevent carry-over of solids and optimises the flow for downstream processing.

The advantage? The system is non-invasive, with all detectors mounted externally, so there's no wear and no risk of contamination. It's easy to install, requires minimal maintenance, and operates reliably in the harsh desert environment. The data also gives Cairn valuable insights into the separation process, helping them manage the height of emulsion layers, reduce slugging impact, and improve overall efficiency.

This smart density profiling is part of Cairn's wider push to extract more value from existing assets. Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) techniques - like steam injection - are standard at the site, helping increase output by up to 20%. But maximising yield isn't just about pulling more

oil from the ground. It's also about refining smarter, right from the first step. And that's exactly what this VEGA solution enables.

By using radiometric sensors in critical early-stage separation, Cairn is not only protecting downstream equipment but also helping

to ensure a consistent, high-quality crude supply that's ready for transport via the world's longest heated crude oil pipeline.



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VEGA HOME OF VALUES

Easigas introduces synthetic natural gas as a strategic solution to south africa's gas constraints



EASIGAS has launched Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG) in South Africa, offering a solution that is directly interchangeable with natural gas and Methane Rich Gas (MRG). SNG is designed to complement pipeline natural gas and provide customers with additional flexibility and supply resilience within their existing infrastructure.

This launch comes at a time when the South African gas market is evolving, with Sasol continuing to supply MRG as a bridging solution ahead of the anticipated LNG transition from 2028 to

2030/31. In this context, SNG provides an additional secure and flexible supply option, supporting continuity for industrial and commercial users while strengthening the overall stability of the gas ecosystem. By expanding available gas solutions, Easigas aims to support energy reliability, competitiveness and customer confidence in a changing energy landscape.

Natural gas currently accounts for approximately 5% of South Africa's primary energy supply, according to the Industrial Gas Users Association of Southern Africa. While this

percentage may seem modest, gas plays a critical role in manufacturing, food processing, smelting, chemicals production and large-scale heating. For many operations, reliable combustion underpins productivity and revenue.

As supply dynamics shift, energy resilience has moved firmly onto the boardroom agenda. Easigas developed SNG to provide stability for businesses that depend on consistent gas performance.

SNG is engineered to match the Wobbe Index, the recognised global standard used to deter-

mine whether gases can be used interchangeably in existing systems. By replicating the combustion characteristics of natural gas, SNG delivers comparable flame performance and energy output without requiring infrastructure changes.

The blended gas is introduced directly into existing natural gas piping systems after the metering station. No additional gas trains, regulator changes, pipeline alterations or burner adjustments are required. The solution also removes the need for line purging, enabling immediate switchover when necessary. For energy-intensive facilities where downtime translates directly into financial loss, this capability provides a clear commercial advantage.

South Africa consumes more than half a million tons of LPG annually, and demand continues to grow as businesses seek dependable and flexible energy options. Easigas supports this demand through

access to three import facilities, agreements with local refineries, and its own operated import terminal in Gqeberha. This diversified supply structure reduces exposure to single-source risk and strengthens long-term supply assurance.

With decades of experience serving major industrial manufacturers across Southern Africa, Easigas combines operational depth with the infrastructure required to support complex energy demands at scale. The introduction of SNG builds on this capabili-

ty, offering businesses a practical and structured alternative as the national gas landscape evolves.

Jeremie Tromp, CEO of Easigas, says the development reflects a proactive approach to supporting industry through the transition. "Local businesses cannot afford energy uncertainty. Our Synthetic Natural Gas solution allows customers to maintain production without redesigning systems or interrupting operations. It gives them greater control at a time when supply predictability is becoming increas-

ingly important."

As the country navigates changing gas supply dynamics, SNG offers a reliable pathway for companies seeking continuity without capital-intensive upgrades. It is not simply a substitute fuel, but a considered response to a shifting energy market.

To find out how Synthetic Natural Gas can support your organisation's energy security, visit www.easigas.com or contact the Easigas team to discuss a tailored solution.

Avoid plant failures by extinguishing quickly with foam

FIRE protection remains one of the most critical challenges in petrochemical production. Facilities handle highly flammable substances under varying operating conditions, creating constant fire and explosion risks. In many older plants, fire protection systems were installed at different times, resulting in a mix of technologies that can complicate safety management.

Despite these complexities, foam-based extinguishing systems remain the preferred solution. Foam can rapidly suppress flammable liquid fires and prevent them from escalating, making it an essential component of modern petrochemical fire protection.

Effective strategies focus on three key high-risk areas: production zones, tank farms and storage facilities.

In production areas, deluge systems and permanently installed monitors are commonly used. These systems are typically supplied by stationary foam proportioners, allowing rapid response to fires involving volatile chemicals.

Tank farms present another major risk. Flammable liquids are stored in tanks with floating or fixed roofs, where fires can spread quickly if not controlled. Foam is discharged through foam pourers connected to stationary proportioners, while mobile firefighting equipment provides additional support during complex incidents.

Warehousing and storage facilities, in-



The purely mechanical FireDos proportioners are highly reliable. They guarantee a constant proportioning rate and the delivery of all foam agent types, including high-viscosity foam agents.

cluding bulk storage and high-rack warehouses, rely on sprinkler or deluge systems combined with foam proportioners. These systems can distribute foam across large areas to contain fires quickly and prevent further damage.

Stationary proportioners play a key role in efficient foam delivery. Often located in pump rooms near water storage tanks, these systems operate mechanically using the flow of extinguishing water. This allows them to be installed at a safe distance from hazardous areas while maintaining reliable performance. They also provide precise foam dosing and can handle high-viscosity foam agents, ensuring effective suppression.

Fixed monitors are another important element of petrochemical fire protection. Compared with extensive pipe networks, monitors can reduce infrastructure costs while

maintaining strong firefighting capability. Modern designs minimise pressure loss and allow foam to be projected over long distances with high accuracy. Many monitors are built from corrosion-resistant materials for use in harsh environments and can be integrated into automated systems for remote operation.

Mobile firefighting units provide an additional layer of flexibility. Fire trailers equipped with proportioners and monitors can be quickly deployed to incidents beyond the reach of fixed infrastructure, reducing the need for personnel to enter hazardous areas.

By combining reliable foam systems with both fixed and mobile firefighting equipment, petrochemical plants can strengthen their fire protection strategies, reduce operational risk and better safeguard both personnel and critical assets.

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Refinery spray technology for petroleum production



Spraying Systems Co. FlowMax lances.

SPRAYING Systems Co., the world's leading manufacturer of spray nozzles, injectors and related systems, represented in Southern Africa by Monitor Engineering since 1975, plays a crucial role in the petroleum refining industry. Their products are engineered to handle harsh environments, ensuring efficient fluid dispersion, cooling, and chemical injection. In refineries, these spray solutions optimise processes, reduce maintenance, and enhance safety. From crude distillation to pollution control, their technology addresses key operational challenges like corrosion, temperature control, and emission reduction.

One primary area of application is in the Crude Distillation Unit (CDU), where spray injectors facilitate water wash operations. Here, water is sprayed to prevent salt build-up and corrosion in distillation columns. This involves hydraulic spray nozzles that distribute water evenly, minimising downtime and extending equipment life. Similarly, in the Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCCU), spray products are used for overhead water washes to combat corrosion from ammonia and cyanide. FCCU feed injection atomises feedstock into catalyst-laden gas streams, improving cracking efficiency with precise drop size control via two-fluid nozzles.

In Cokers, spray systems handle off-

gas cooling through steam atomisation, using clog-resistant spray nozzles to quench hot gases and prevent fouling. Hydrotreaters benefit from chemical injection, where injectors deliver neutralising amines or inhibitors to reduce corrosiveness in fractionators. These lances, often made from corrosion-resistant alloys like Hastelloy, ensure uniform spray patterns even under high pressure and temperature.



Spraying Systems Co. FloMax-S01 steam atomising retractable injector.

Beyond unit-specific uses, Spraying Systems Co. products support broader refinery processes. For instance, in heat exchangers, inhibitors are injected to prevent corrosion, while additive injection enhances product quality. Steam quenching in cracking heaters controls temperatures, and slurry backflush clears hydrocarbons with catalysts using wear-resistant nozzles. Pollution control applications include flue gas desulfurization (FGD) with clog-resistant spray nozzles and Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) for NO_x control via ammonia injection.

The company's injectors, such as the

OptiMax® series, mix steam with oil to provide a uniform spray pattern and quick evaporation. We also offer Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) modelling for optimal placement and performance. This addresses challenges like flow profiles, erosion, and vibration, ensuring dependable operation in co-current or counter-current setups. Benefits include reduced maintenance—many injectors last years without service—improved efficiency, and compliance with ASME standards for safety.

"It's easy to assume what's happening at every stage of your processes," says Monitor Engineering MD Grant Orsmond, "but the systems are enclosed. We therefore offer our expertise, working with you to

model your spray operations and provide new insight into areas that could be improved. We can also help you select better nozzles, optimise injector placement within a vessel, or design and fabricate an injector to deliver the performance you need, complete with testing and documentation. Injectors can be built to comply with ASME® Boiler & Pressure Vessel Code (BPVC), ASME U-Stamp Vessel Manufacturing, ASME B31.1, ASME B31.3, ASME BPVC Section IX and PED 2014/68/EU."

For more information contact grant@monitorspray.co.za or visit www.spray.co.za

Allmech introduces new water treatment solutions for 2026

SOUTH African businesses face a range of water treatment challenges that often require problem-solving. Allmech, leading South African manufacturer of boilers and supplier of water treatment equipment and chemicals, has announced a series of product updates for 2026 aimed at improving reliability, efficiency and system simplicity in high-volume and high-hardness water environments.

According to Allmech Managing Director Lionel Maasdorp, the most significant development for the local market is the introduction of Runxin's new F153 ceramic disc filter and softener valve. With a capacity of up to 70 m³ per hour, it is the largest valve in Runxin's range to date.

"Many industrial and agricultural applications require very high flow rates," Maasdorp says. "Until now, we often had to place multiple valves in parallel to achieve the required volumes. A single high-flow valve simplifies system design, reduces the number of vessels and components, and improves overall reliability."

The move to ceramic disc technology is also a deliberate response to performance challenges experienced with piston-operated valves in demanding conditions. Factory testing has shown the disc configuration to offer improved durability, and Runxin has indicated that existing piston valves will be converted to disc valves as part of a broader focus on long-term reliability.

Maasdorp says that another key addition is the F118 multi-functional flow control valve, designed for areas with high groundwater hardness. The valve allows operators to choose between up-flow or down-flow regeneration, as well as regeneration using hard or softened water. This flexibility is particularly valuable in regions with high calcium concentrations, such as parts of the Northern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

"Being able to regenerate with soft water helps ensure full resin capacity, while up-flow regeneration can reduce salt usage," Maasdorp explains. "These are practical advantages for customers operating in challenging



water conditions."

Beyond valves, Runxin has also introduced updates to valve control systems, including printed circuit boards that enable feedback via an RS-485 port. This opens the door to improved monitoring and system management, particularly for larger installations. A new range of low-pressure irrigation valves, pressure-reducing valves and high-flow refill solutions was also showcased.

In parallel, Allmech is expanding its value-added offering to include flow meters, vessels, non-return valves, pressure-re-

ducing valves and consumables. "Our goal is to give customers access to a reliable, well-matched range from a single supplier," Maasdorp says. "That reduces complexity, shortens lead times and supports better system performance."

"These developments reflect Runxin's ongoing innovation and our shared focus on practical, affordable water treatment solutions," he adds. "For our customers, it means simpler systems, improved reliability and more options for solving real-world water problems in 2026 and beyond."

Vopak pushes R18bn South African LNG terminal decision to 2028 amid energy uncertainty

DUTCH energy infrastructure firm Royal Vopak has postponed a key investment decision on South Africa's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal, citing ongoing regulatory and market uncertainty. The company now expects to make a final investment decision in the first quarter of 2028, two years later than initially anticipated.

The delay follows setbacks in the country's gas-to-power programme. A court ruling last year halted

plans by state utility Eskom to develop a 3 000MW gas-fired power station at Richards Bay, dampening demand visibility for imported LNG and slowing associated infrastructure timelines.

Vopak was appointed in 2024, alongside Transnet Pipelines, to develop and operate the proposed Zululand Energy Terminal for a 25-year concession. The two-phase project is expected to cost about \$1 billion (roughly R18 billion), with initial capacity of



two million tonnes of LNG a year and potential expansion to five million tonnes.

The company is continuing discussions with potential offtakers, including global energy major Exxon-

Mobil, as it reassesses market fundamentals.

The project remains central to South Africa's plans to diversify its energy mix, improve security of supply and reduce reliance on coal-fired generation.



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SCAN ME



Coastal Park Landfill gas-to-energy plant



By Kris Van der Bijl

IN November 2025, Cape Town commissioned its R93 million landfill gas-to-energy plant at Coastal Park Landfill in Muizenberg and the two-megawatt facility is already generating more questions than kilowatts.

The plant generates approximately 1.3 million kWh per month, of which 1.2 million kWh is fed directly into the Cape Town grid, which is enough to power more than 4 000 households, with the remainder powering the landfill's own operations.

“The Vissershok Landfill Site has an operational flare which has shown the potential gas yield, and a design of the landfill gas-to-energy plant has commenced,” says Twigg.

Perforated pipes sunk up to 30 metres into the landfill extract methane from decomposing organic waste, which is fed into on-site engines to generate electricity.

Cape Town's plant is one of roughly eight such facilities nationally, with others in Johannesburg and eThekweni.

What distinguishes Coastal Park is what surrounds the generation figure: R36 million in carbon credit revenue already produced, and a planned R82 million expansion that is more advanced, and more complicated, than initial announcements suggested.

A revenue stream still being calibrated

Alderman Grant Twigg, Mayoral Committee Member for Urban Waste Management, is careful about how the R36 million

figure is framed.

“The R36 million was for carbon credits generated over two years between January 2018 and December 2020. Since this time, it has continued to generate credits, but these must still be validated and verified under the newly established Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism, which is being operationalised.”

The PACM is a more rigorous standard than the legacy frameworks under which the initial credits were certified.

Twigg says the City hopes to continue generating revenue

“Plant commissioning is estimated to be mid-2029 for the first phase, with further phases planned thereafter.”

That is further along than many municipal infrastructure announcements reach. Whether momentum holds through procurement is the open question.

What 2MW actually means

Asked whether a 2MW plant moves the needle on energy security or is primarily a proof of concept, Twigg re-frames it.

He notes that, “The primary focus is to capture and convert the methane gas — which carries 25 to 27 times the global warming potential of CO₂ — to benign carbon dioxide and water vapour, for the protection of the surrounding communities and the environment.”

The range reflects different IPCC assessment vintages as the City's press releases cite 25 times while Twigg's response to CBN uses 27.

However, neither reading changes the underlying point.

On scale, Twigg is measured: “Energy security will come from a mix of different technologies. This 2MW base-load plant output sets the example for further rollout by all role players concerned.”

Coastal Park is best understood as a template, not a solution. Two megawatts does not move the needle in isolation

But a replicable pipeline across Cape Town's active landfills is a different proposition, and Vissershok by 2029 is where that proposition will be tested.

Source: Alderman Grant Twigg, Mayoral Committee Member for Urban Waste Management

Strategic shutdowns - strengthening safety, skills and operational resilience in petrochemical plants

By Pierre Bekker, Director and Jacques Maritz, National Sales & Service Manager at Quyn International Outsourcing



Pierre Bekker, Director.

IN the petrochemical industry, shutdowns are high-stakes operations that play a vital role in maintaining plant performance, safety, and compliance. These planned pauses in production allow teams to carry out essential maintenance, inspect equipment, upgrade systems, and ensure adherence to environmental and safety standards. A well-executed shutdown helps prevent unplanned outages, minimises costly downtime, and keeps operations running efficiently long after production resumes. It is also a strategic opportunity to enhance processes, eliminate hidden risks, and strengthen the reliability of critical systems.

In South Africa, shutdowns must adhere to stringent labour and safety regulations under the Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, and Occupational Health and Safety Act. Every worker (temporary or permanent) must meet strict legal, safety, and certification standards before entering the site, and managing this level of compliance across large, fast-moving shutdown teams can be complex. This is where Temporary Employment Services (TES) providers come in, offering the systems, structures, and expertise needed to help organisations stay compliant, streamline contractor onboarding, and maintain workforce flexibility without compromising safety or governance.

Addressing skill gaps and high-risk work

Shutdowns in the petrochemical industry demand precision, speed, and specialised skills. Yet, one of the biggest challenges companies face is having enough qualified people to complete every task safely and on time. Many plants

simply don't have the in-house expertise required for highly technical shutdown work such as reactor overhauls, pressure vessel inspections, and hazardous chemical handling. These activities call for certified, medically fit, and legally compliant personnel under South African labour and safety laws.

At the same time, shutdown schedules are tight. Every hour of downtime carries significant financial implications, so delays or rework can quickly erode profits. Skill shortages and uneven workforce quality increase the risk of accidents, safety breaches, and equipment failures once operations resume. Bringing in temporary workers can ease the pressure, but only if they meet the strict safety and competency standards set out by legislation. This is where TES providers add real value, by supplying pre-vetted, compliant, and technically skilled workers who help petrochemical companies maintain both productivity and legal compliance during shutdowns.

TES partners provide skilled and flexible workforce

Given the intense time pressure and specialist demands of petrochemical shutdowns, partnering with a TES provider has become a strategic advantage. TES partners give companies immediate access to pre-vetted, certified, and experienced workers, such as welders, fitters, electricians, and safety officers, who meet all South African labour and safety compliance requirements. This ensures shutdown activities are carried out safely, efficiently, and within legal parameters.

Engaging a TES provider early in the shut-

down planning process also streamlines workforce management. It enables better forecasting of skills requirements, faster onboarding, and smoother integration of temporary staff into site-specific safety and operational systems. TES partners handle the full administrative load (covering HR, payroll, and compliance with employment legislation) so plant managers can focus on meeting technical milestones rather than managing paperwork.

Most importantly, TES partnerships provide the flexibility petrochemical companies need during unpredictable shutdown cycles. Workforce numbers can scale up or down as project demands change, reducing overtime costs and preventing fatigue among permanent staff. Experienced TES workers often bring valuable lessons from other industrial projects, contributing to improved safety performance, productivity, and process optimisation across the shutdown.

Driving efficiency, cost control, and strategic advantage

TES partnerships deliver measurable value at every stage of a shutdown. By matching the right skills to each task, companies improve workmanship, reduce errors, and minimise costly rework. Managing temporary labour through a TES provider also brings predictability to short-term labour costs while maintaining full compliance with South African labour and safety regulations. This reduces administrative and legal risk, freeing plant leaders to focus on achieving technical milestones and safety objectives.

With HR, onboarding, and compliance managed externally,

shutdowns become more structured and efficient. Teams can make better operational decisions, safety outcomes improve, and the overall project becomes far less reactive. What was once a stressful, unpredictable process becomes a well-coordinated exercise in precision and accountability.

Building operational resilience through proactive partnerships

The greatest advantage of a TES partnership lies in the shift that it empowers from reactive maintenance to proactive operational



Jacques Maritz, National Sales & Service Manager.

resilience. By securing a pipeline of skilled, compliant, and readily deployable workers, companies can plan with confidence and respond faster to unexpected challenges. Over time, this creates a sustainable model for efficiency and continuous improvement, where shutdowns are no longer disruptions but opportunities to strengthen long-term performance.

For South Africa's petrochemical sector, partnering with the right TES provider means more than just filling skill gaps. It's about ensuring every shutdown is completed safely, on schedule, and within budget; while building the resilience and reliability needed to stay competitive in a demanding, high-risk industry.

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World-renowned Bloemendal Wine Estate offered by open tender in landmark winelands opportunity



THE iconic Bloemendal Wine Estate, a treasured gem of the Cape's winelands with a history dating back to 1702, has been brought to market via open tender sale by Special Power of Attorney, presenting an extraordinary opportunity to acquire a world-class wine, hospitality and development asset in the heart of Durbanville's prestigious Wine Valley.

The sale comprises portion 1 of Farm Bloemendal 1471 - 181 hectares and the remainder of Farm Bloemendal 1471 - 57 hectares. Together, forming a significant 238-hectare holding.

Bloemendal Wine Estate is internation-

ally recognised for its award-winning wines, including Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinotage and Cabernet Sauvignon. Positioned within Cape Town's Northern Suburbs, the estate blends centuries-old heritage with modern commercial operations and future development potential.

The sale also includes extensive commercial infrastructure, including the following facilities: restaurants, a winery, a wine tasting room, conference facilities, as well as a proposed residential and commercial development (all furniture excluded).

A proposed mixed residential and commercial development

across approximately 40-50 hectares of the estate forms a major component of the opportunity. "Bloemendal is not simply a wine farm - it is a globally recognised," says Tanya Jovanovski, from Rawson Auctions. "Opportunities of this calibre, scale and location are extraordinarily rare.

For qualified local and international investors seeking a Winelands acquisition with strong brand equity and significant upside, this open tender presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity." She adds, "With its 300-year legacy, established hospitality footprint and approved

subdivision progress, Bloemendal offers immediate operational value combined with long-term strategic growth."

Open tender Details:

The open tender sale is Wednesday, 25 March 2026 at 13:00 and offers from R180 million will be reviewed. All buyers are required to register via email at tanya.auctions@rawson.co.za.

The farm is VAT-registered and sold as a going concern. Interested parties are requested to submit all offers on the Rawson Auctions standard terms and conditions offer to purchase, or a copy of which can be obtained by emailing tanya.auctions@rawson.co.za - 082 4119599

Terms and Conditions

- Proof of funds of R200 million
- Required FICA documentation
- 5% non-refundable deposit payable

on the fall of the hammer.

- 5% + VAT auctioneer's commission payable by the buyer.
- All bidders must be pre-registered and submit FICA documentation.

Indemnity

Rawson Auctions, the staff, and the auctioneer indemnify themselves against any claims, damages or being sued because of any litigation between the purchaser and the seller relating to the auction of the

property. Rawson Auctions is not liable for any litigation between the purchaser and the seller. Consumer Protection Act regulations stipulate that all bidders be registered and provide certified copies of their identity documents along with proof of residence.

For viewings and more information, please contact the Rawson Auctions team:

- Tanya Jovanovski - 082 411 9599
- Jacques Le Sueur - 083 685 6548
- Email: tanya.auctions@rawson.co.za



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TANYA JOVANOVSKI
082 411 9599
tanya.auctions@rawson.co.za
Principal Property Practitioner

JACQUES LE SUEUR
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Macassar Wastewater Treatment upgrade doubles capacity

By Staff Writer

THE government has committed to investing R4 billion to upgrade the Macassar Wastewater Treatment Works in the national budget as part of

the efforts to prevent a severe water shortage seen 10 years ago in Cape Town.

The upgrade will double the wastewater treatment capacity from 34 million litres per day to 80 million litres within the Macas-

sar sewerage catchment to meet both current and future demand through the refurbishment and extension of the wastewater treatment works.

News of the upgrade came soon after the City of Cape Town an-

nounced it was planning to build a Water Desalination Plant that would yield a minimum of 50 million litres/day of desalinated water from sea water to potable water.

The government committed R2.5 billion

to develop the plan in the budget.

Aside from the planned upgrades to the Macassar plant and the creation of the desalination plant, the City of Cape Town is also in the process of investing R5.2 billion

in upgrading its Potsdam wastewater plant in Milnerton, which will benefit about 75 000 households. Once complete, its capacity will be doubled from 47 million litres to 100 million litres per day.

The City is also scoping further upgrades to the Zandvliet water treatment plant which will be completed by 2039.

The upgrading of the water treatment plants and the development of the water desalination plant comes as the city is seeing its population grow rapidly in recent years. Its population grew from 4,4 million in 2019, to 5,1 million in 2025, and this figure could grow to 8,4 million by 2050, according to the City's Cape Town 2050 report.

The report said the City needed to diversify its water sources away from surface water to remain resilient in the face of climate change. In 2015, severe drought saw the City of Cape Town almost reach "Day Zero" where it would effectively run out of water.

Since then, it has introduced the New Water Programme (NWP), which aims to add 300 million litres of water a day from new sources by the end of 2031. This will see it move away from using dams and more to seawater desalination, groundwater extraction and water reuse to source water.

The NWP also included activities like the removal of invasive alien species, which in a six-month period, saw 6.1 billion litres of water replenished and making its way to the regions dams. This is equivalent to 44 million litres more water per day, gained from removing non-indigenous plants.

The region's dams can only provide two years of water security, and the implementation of the NWP would provide much needed further sources of water.

The city, province and the national government are also working together to increase the flow of water to the Voëlvei Dam. This would see the Berg River-Voëlvei Augmentation Scheme (BRVAS) project provide a boost to Cape Town's water supply by extracting 23 million cubic metres of water annually from the Berg River. To maximise efficiency, BRVAS leveraged existing infrastructure where possible. This included utilising Voëlvei Dam, established water treatment works, Cape Town's existing pipeline from the treatment plant, and facilities managed by the West Coast District Municipality.



Digital tunnel: Even more possibilities for tunnel automation

Smart automation solutions from a single source to ensure sustainable and long-lasting tunnel operation.

Tunnels have a crucial role to play in the development of an efficient and sustainable mobility system. But high requirements regarding the construction, safe operation, and the degree of automation of tunnels present significant challenges for planners, operators, and system integrators. Ever-more complex projects and large-scale increases in transportation capacity call for digital solutions.

Phoenix Contact will support you in these digitalization processes.



Tunnel automation projects include a wide variety of applications.

Phoenix Contact provides the technology for all the electrical engineering processes in tunnel infrastructure – starting with the central element of the control technology, with the connection of the sensors and actuators, through to surge protection and all the way to a comprehensive safety concept. Based on our industry expertise, and taking specific requirements into account, we create preconfigured control cabinet and software solutions that ensure maximum efficiency and sustainability in tunnels.

Intelligent lighting solutions ensure maximum energy efficiency and safety in tunnels.

Installation companies, operators, and lighting system planners must illuminate tunnels uniformly and control the intensity of the lighting depending on the situation.

In order to counteract the risk of accidents, especially when vehicles are entering the tunnel, the lighting conditions need to be adjusted to the increasing darkness.

With the predefined control cabinet solutions, you can configure your entire lighting system quickly and easily, without any programming effort.

Combined with the versatile and robust QPD installation system, Tunnel Lighting Advanced ensures fast installation and maintenance procedures. This enables you to extend maintenance intervals and save operating costs.

The intelligent control system ensures the ideal lighting level throughout the entire tunnel by incorporating parameters that affect the light intensity. In addition to the measured luminance at the tunnel entrance, the current traffic speed and traffic density are also taken into account. Since only as much light is generated as is needed at any given time, the energy costs are lower and the service life of the LED lights is extended.

The intelligent controller can constantly adjust the illuminance to specific tunnel conditions such as weather, traffic speed, traffic density, as well as other sensor inputs.

The diagnostic function featured in Tunnel Lighting Advanced helps you plan predictive maintenance. Potential faults or premature failure of tunnel luminaires are detected with the help of the continuous energy measurement of each individual light point. The system learns the current characteristics of the entire tunnel lighting system and can inform the operator in the event of deviations. Our ready-to-install control cabinet solutions allow you to configure your entire lighting system quickly and easily.

The preprogrammed solutions can be integrated flexibly into your existing automation systems. As a result, you can reduce your programming effort by up to 75%, which benefits the entire project.



For more information:

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Schröder EXEDRA: Powering the next generation of smart city lighting

BEKA Schröder is proud to introduce you to Schröder EXEDRA: The most advanced lighting management system on the market that paves the way for future applications in a smarter city.

Artificial lighting has been part of our lives for a very long time. Over the years, technology in lighting has been developed to continuously increase performance. Schröder EXEDRA is a remote control platform for intelligent streetlighting. It relies on shared and open technologies for seamless vertical and horizontal IoT integrations, and brings a new layer of tangible benefits that maximises the return on investment and creates new opportunities for cities.

Cities looking to implement a smart strategy need tailored solutions that enable them to start their journey. Schröder EXEDRA opens up an infinite number of possibilities to improve neighbourhoods and communities by deploying the right solutions in the right places. It is the ideal tool to align value with short- and mid-term targets while sustaining long-term vision.

Key advantages of Schröder EXEDRA include:

- Technology-agnostic: Schröder EXEDRA uses open standards and protocols to provide an architecture that can interact seamlessly with third-party software and hardware solutions. Unlike proprietary systems, Schröder EXEDRA is designed to unlock complete interoperability.
- Plug-and-play: Once the node or sensor is plugged into the luminaire, an intelligent automated commissioning process recognises, verifies and retrieves luminaire data into the user interface. The self-healing mesh between the luminaire controllers enables real-time adaptive lighting to be configured directly in the user interface.
- Adaptive user interface: Schröder EXEDRA offers fully customisable dashboards. Add, move, resize and organise widgets in the web user interface to create your personal dashboards.
- Data for decisions: Schröder EXEDRA collects massive amounts of data from end devices and aggregates, analy-

ses and intuitively displays it to help end-users take the right actions. With this advanced data presented both visually and in reports, Schröder EXEDRA is a powerful tool for efficiency, rational-

isation and decision making.

View the video here, which explains why Schröder EXEDRA is the ideal lighting management system: <https://youtu.be/95rF7tEVz84>

It is commonly agreed

that smart street lighting is the springboard for smart cities. Luminaires are everywhere across the city. They are evenly distributed in the streets, installed at an ideal height for wireless communication and connected to the

power grid. Cities will rely more and more on street lighting to build additional value beyond illumination.

Over time, depending on their strategy and priorities, managers will look at converting their smart lighting scheme to

a proper smart city infrastructure. Investing in a flexible and futureproof solution is key to succeed in this next step.

Schröder's Smart City Centre of Excellence, Hyperion, has developed Schröder EXEDRA as the ideal platform to

build open, interoperable and resilient IoT ecosystems and support smart cities for the future.

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Tridonic advances smart lighting and ESG building solutions with Building Asset360 in South Africa

TRIDONIC is strengthening its position in the South African building and construction sector with the launch of Building Asset360, an intelligent lighting asset

management approach designed to support Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance, carbon reduction and net zero carbon construction.

Smart lighting systems for sustainable construction

Modern commercial buildings operate for decades, with the ma-

majority of lifecycle costs occurring during the operational phase. Energy consumption, maintenance and facilities management represent the largest long term expenses. Building Asset360 transforms conventional lighting into smart lighting systems that improve energy efficiency, enable predictive maintenance and deliver measurable carbon reduction.

Unifying the connected world

Matter is a standardised open-source language with the aim to reduce the complexity of connecting smart devices. Our Matter-enabling lighting products allow you to use the most popular ecosystems from well-known manufacturers and their innovative controls.

This allows you to build a smart, voice-controlled environment where not only the lighting, but all Matter-compatible devices such as blinds, heating, entertainment devices, security systems, and more, speak the same language.



“Reducing operational and embodied carbon is critical for responsible development in South Africa.”

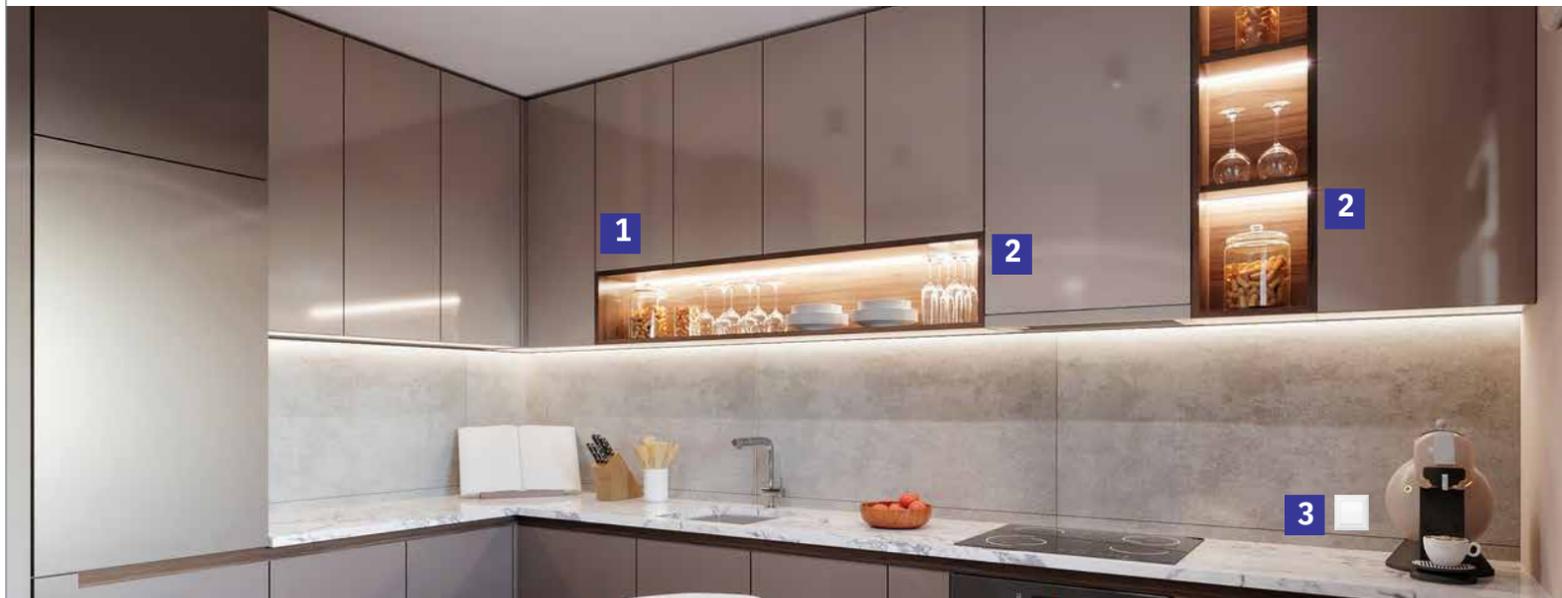
At the core of the platform is Tridonic’s premium DALI 2 driver technology, featuring integrated wireless communication nodes and proprietary lumDATA. This provides real time access to lighting asset data, energy usage metrics and diagnostic performance insights across entire commercial developments including features such as lifetime indicator, which is predicting the lifetime of an LED driver.

For developers, consulting engineers and facilities managers, this enables condition-based monitoring rather than reactive maintenance. Predictive maintenance reduces unnecessary replacements, lowers operational expenditure and extends luminaire lifespan, directly contributing to embodied carbon reduction and sustainable building technology outcomes.

ESG compliance and carbon reduction in commercial buildings

Granular energy reporting at driver level allows accurate tracking of electricity consumption. This supports ESG building solutions by providing auditable data for sustainability reporting, carbon benchmarking and environmental compliance requirements.

By extending asset life and enabling component level replacement instead of full fixture change, Building Asset360 supports circular economy principles such as refurbishment and reuse. This approach reduces material waste and aligns with net zero



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 - Nominal lifetime up to 50,000 h



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- Push button coupler**
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 - Small size fits in flush box
 - Use of existing switches in the building
 - Easy wiring

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Keep the energy flowing — and register with the BCCEI



SOUTH Africa's transition toward renewable energy is reshaping the national landscape. Across the country, cranes, graders and concrete mixers are hard at work on wind and solar farms that will supply the next generation of clean power. But beyond the visible turbines and solar panels lies the crucial groundwork that makes every project possible - the specialised civil engineering work that provides the platforms, roads and foundations for a sustainable future.

From building access roads and haul routes to pouring reinforced-concrete foundations for turbine towers, civil engineering contractors form the backbone of renewable energy construction. Their expertise ensures that every structure is stable, every site accessible and every cable securely routed. According to the Bargaining

Council for the Civil Engineering Industry (BCCEI), these activities fall squarely within the civil-engineering scope and that means companies performing this work are required by law to register with the Council.

"Renewable energy projects depend on solid civil engineering fundamentals," Natasha Ramsawhook, Legal Advisor at the BCCEI, explains. "Foundations, cable trenches, roads, drainage systems and substations are all civil works that fall within our regulated framework. The companies carrying out this work play a vital role in South Africa's energy transition and it is essential that they operate within the country's legal and ethical labour standards."

Before a turbine can turn, civil contractors spend months preparing the terrain. Bulk earthworks, site clearance and compaction

ensure stable ground conditions, topsoil must be stripped and stockpiled for rehabilitation, access roads are built to handle trucks carrying 80 plus metre long blades and heavy tower sections.

Once the earthworks are complete, deep concrete foundations are poured to anchor the turbines, while reinforced concrete pads are constructed for substations, transformers and maintenance facilities. Trenches are excavated for electrical and communication cables and storm-water drainage systems are installed to protect against flooding and erosion. Every one of these tasks is defined as civil engineering work and therefore falls under the BCCEI's scope of regulation.

The BCCEI, established under South Africa's Labour Relations Act, regulates employment conditions within the civil engineering industry through six collective agreements. These cover wages, working hours, benefits and dispute resolution processes. Registration with the BCCEI is not optional - it ensures that companies comply with national labour legislation and it safeguards both employers and employees through transparent standardised practices. Non-compliance can result in financial pen-

alties, back-payments, reputational damage and even disqualification from public tenders.

Ramsawhook stresses that registration also brings tangible business benefits. It provides contractors with a Letter of Good Standing, confirming their compliance and improving eligibility for future projects. It also signals to developers and EPC contractors that a company operates ethically and professionally - a key consideration in a sector increasingly funded by international investors who demand strong governance and fair labour compliance.

"Compliance isn't just an administrative exercise," she says. "It is about building a resilient professional industry that protects workers, upholds standards and supports sustainable growth. When contractors register with the BCCEI, they are strengthening their own businesses and contributing to the stability of South Africa's renewable energy rollout.

"Our message to contractors is simple," Ramsawhook concludes. "If your company is performing civil works on renewable energy projects, whether as a main contractor or a subcontractor, you are part of the civil engineering industry and must be registered."

Western Cape R131bn infrastructure pipeline: Ambition vs Execution



By Kris van der Bijl

THE Western Cape R131bn infrastructure pipeline represents one of the largest regional public investment commitments in South Africa. The programme includes 52 priority projects spanning healthcare, transport, bulk services and urban development.

The scale of the pipeline signals strong provincial commitment to long term capital investment. However infrastructure programmes operate in two distinct environments. The first is political commitment. The second is construction sector execution.

"A large proportion of contractors remain in the CIDB four to six range," Devereux says.

For contractors, financiers and subcontractors operating in the Western Cape construction sector, the critical question is not the size of the pipeline but the certainty of procurement, visibility of funding and the ability of contractors to absorb large scale project delivery.

The transition from declared pipeline to active construction will determine whether the Western Cape R131bn infrastructure pipeline translates into sustained economic activity.

Tygerberg central hospital PPP

One of the most significant projects within the infrastructure programme is the redevelopment of Tygerberg Hospital through a public private partnership.

The project was first shaped by a Cabinet decision in 2009 and is currently targeting

financial close in 2028. Commissioning is unlikely before 2033. This long development cycle highlights the complexity of large scale public private partnership procurement in South Africa.

Extended timelines introduce execution risk for contractors who must align capacity planning with uncertain procurement schedules. For the Western Cape construction sector the project illustrates a structural challenge. Contractor capacity is built around confirmed projects rather than long dated infrastructure plans.

CIDB grading and contractor capacity

Contractor readiness within the Western Cape infrastructure pipeline is closely linked to the grading framework of the Construction Industry Development Board.

CIDB grading assesses contractors according to financial capacity, technical experience, track record on public infrastructure and balance sheet strength.

According to Petra Devereux, Executive Director of the Master Builders' Association Western Cape, the province has strong representation in the higher CIDB categories.

However structural constraints remain in the mid tier contractor market.

"A large proportion of contractors remain in the CIDB four to six range," Devereux says. "While technically capable, many do not yet have the financial capacity required for large and complex projects."

She notes that these constraints do not reflect a lack of technical skill. With improved procurement structuring, better visibility of project packages and

access to bridging finance, more emerging contractors could participate in major infrastructure delivery.

Procurement timing and market confidence

Wesley Craig Beneke, Founder and Chief Executive of WCB Construction, distinguishes between infrastructure pipeline visibility and procurement certainty. He says the Western Cape has demonstrated stronger planning discipline than many provinces. However contractors plan around confirmed projects rather than headline announcements.

"Complex infrastructure projects, particularly public private partnerships, often face extended pre procurement phases linked to funding structures, governance requirements and risk allocation," Beneke explains.

In this environment contractor capacity is developed through live projects rather than projected infrastructure timelines.

Execution will determine impact

The Western Cape R131bn infrastructure pipeline reflects significant strategic ambition and strong institutional planning.

However the ultimate economic impact of the programme will depend on several factors. These include procurement timing, funding certainty, risk allocation and the ability of the construction sector to scale delivery.

In infrastructure development, capital commitments alone do not generate economic growth. Execution certainty, disciplined sequencing and contractor capacity ultimately determine whether an infrastructure pipeline becomes sustained construction activity across the province.

Tridonic advances smart lighting and ESG building solutions with Building Asset360 in South Africa

Continued from P16

carbon construction strategies increasingly required across South Africa's commercial property sector.

Intelligent building management system integration

The sceneCOM evo DA2 controller forms the intelligent backbone of the solution. As an IP addressable lighting control system, it manages up to 192 devices across wired and wireless networks. Integration with intelligent building management systems is achieved through BACnet, REST API and MQTT protocols, ensuring seamless interoperability within smart building environments.

Wireless lighting control technology

eliminates additional cabling, making it ideal for retrofit lighting upgrades and energy efficient refurbishments. Reduced installation disruption supports lower project related emissions and faster implementation within operational buildings.

Smart building technology beyond lighting

The wireless mesh infrastructure can also support air quality monitoring, thermal and noise sensing as well as space utilisation sensors. These smart building technologies provide valuable insight into occupancy patterns and indoor environmental quality, strengthening ESG performance and supporting healthier and safer workplaces.

Speaking to Cape Business News, Tridonic South Africa General Manager Charles Tewitz emphasised the importance of intelligent lighting in achieving net zero carbon construction goals.

"Smart lighting is no longer simply about illumination. Building Asset360 positions lighting as a strategic ESG building solution. Accurate energy data, predictive maintenance and extended asset lifecycles directly support carbon reduction in commercial buildings," he said.

He added that sustainable construction requires measurable results. "Reducing operational and embodied carbon is critical for responsible development in South Africa. Our intelligent lighting asset management

platform delivers the verified data and control needed to achieve meaningful net zero progress."

With more than five decades of lighting expertise, Tridonic's Building Asset360 provides the South African building and construction industry with a practical pathway to smart lighting systems, improved energy efficiency and measurable carbon reduction aligned with ESG and sustainable construction objectives.

For enquiries, contact: Tridonic SA (Pty) Ltd Tel: 021 110 5687 <https://www.tridonic.com> Office 5, Ground Floor, The Estuaries, Building 12, Oxbow Crescent, Century City, Cape Town, 7441

Huguenot Tunnel upgrade set for R4.5bn expansion



By Adrian Ephraim

AFRICA's longest road tunnel is about to get significantly bigger — and safer.

The South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) has confirmed that the Huguenot Tunnel, the 3.9km toll tunnel linking Paarl and Worcester on the N1 national road, is heading into a multi-year upgrade programme valued at approximately R4.5 billion. The tender for the project is currently being advertised.

The upgrade cen-

tres on commissioning a second tunnel bore that has been sitting dormant since the 1980s. When the south bore was constructed and opened in March 1988, a parallel north bore was excavated simultaneously — but never fully fitted out or opened to traffic. It has since served as an emergency escape route. That changes now.

"The commissioning of the north bore will include the installation of a concrete lining, road surface, ventilation, lighting, and modern tunnel

management systems," Luphelo Ngalo, SANRAL spokesperson for the Western Cape Province told Cape Business News. "Once operational, traffic will be diverted to the north bore while the existing south bore is upgraded to the same international standards."

Upon completion, expected after a total construction period of approximately five years, the Huguenot Tunnel will operate as a twin-bore facility carrying two lanes of traffic in each direction, a significant step

up from its current single-bore, bidirectional configuration.

A corridor under pressure

The scale of the upgrade reflects the tunnel's critical role in South Africa's freight and logistics network. The tunnel carries approximately 13 000 to 14 000 vehicles per day on average, spiking to around 25 000 during peak holiday periods.

According to SANRAL, heavy vehicles account for roughly 2 700 of those daily crossings, and more than 5 million vehicles passed through in the past year alone, bringing the cumulative total to over 132 million since opening.

The alternative, the Du Toitskloof Mountain Pass, is barely used by comparison. Only about 8% of corridor traffic opts for the pass; the remaining 92% use the tunnel. That dominance underscores how little redundancy exists on this route, and why upgrading the ageing

south bore while keeping traffic moving has required a carefully sequenced approach.

Safety imperatives driving the project

SANRAL has cited the European Directive on Road Tunnel Safety (EU/2004/54/EC, Clause 2.1.2), which requires that when a 15-year traffic forecast exceeds 10 000 vehicles per day per lane, a twin-tube tunnel with unidirectional traffic flow becomes mandatory. The Huguenot Tunnel crossed that threshold some time ago.

"... one of the most significant road infrastructure investments in the Western Cape in decades..."

SANRAL CEO Reginald Demana said that the south bore's electrical and mechanical systems, built in the 1980s, have neared their end-of-life limits and require a significant safety upgrade — particularly around electricity supply and

ventilation — work that can only be completed once all traffic has been shifted to the north bore.

The scope of works on the north bore will include a concrete lining, continuously reinforced two-lane pavement with drainage and services, electrical, ventilation and fire-fighting systems, and upgrades to the highway on either side — including the design of a new Elands River Bridge and the widening of the existing Molenaars River Bridge.

South bore upgrade works will address moisture ingress, structural integrity, and the rehabilitation of fire-damaged sections.

Fire capacity will also be substantially enhanced. The upgrade will improve the tunnel's resistance to fire by upgrading its load capacity from 30MW to 100MW, and will introduce new ventilation technology for both single and twin-bore configurations, along with fixed

fire-fighting systems in both bores.

Project oversight

Consulting engineering firm SMEC South Africa was appointed by SANRAL in 2021 to oversee design, procurement, and construction supervision for the project — a firm with historical ties to the tunnel, having provided structural design and geotechnical services during its original construction in the early 1980s. The design and procurement phase is set to span 15 months, with construction planned over 55 months.

With the tender now under evaluation and construction expected to commence within the coming months, the upgrade represents one of the most significant road infrastructure investments in the Western Cape in decades, and a long-overdue modernisation of a tunnel that has quietly underpinned the Cape's economy for nearly four decades.



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MATTEI offers Smarter Compressed Air for sustainable packaging

IN packaging facilities, compressed air powers everything from filling and labelling to conveying and blow moulding. Often called the “fourth utility,” it is essential to operations — yet it is also one of the largest energy consumers in a plant. As manufacturers work to reduce energy costs and meet sustainability targets, compressed air systems are coming under closer scrutiny. Improving efficiency at this level can deliver measurable financial and environmental benefits. One technology gaining attention is the rotary vane compressor.

Mattei Rotary Vane Air Compressors, available from 1.5 kW to 250 kW with pressure options of 8, 10, and 13 bar, are engineered for consistent airflow and long-term performance. Their design incorporates fewer moving parts than many convention-

al systems, enabling smooth, continuous rotation with reduced friction and wear.

For packaging plants operating multiple shifts or 24/7 production cycles, this mechanical simplicity translates into reliable performance and sustained efficiency over time.

total electricity consumption.

Even incremental efficiency improvements can generate substantial cost savings across a year of continuous operation.

By minimising energy loss and maintaining stable performance, advanced rotary vane technology

- Decrease operating costs
- Support ESG and sustainability goals

Because compressed air systems run continuously in many packaging plants, efficiency gains compound over time — reducing both carbon footprint and total cost of ownership.

Built for reliability and longevity

In high-speed packaging environments, downtime is not an option. Equipment reliability directly impacts productivity and delivery schedules.

With fewer moving components and robust engineering, rotary vane compressors are designed for durability and extended service life. Longer operating lifecycles not only reduce maintenance requirements but also contribute to sustainability by limiting premature equipment re-

placement.

As the packaging industry balances performance, cost control, and environmental responsibility, utilities can no longer be overlooked. Upgrading compressed air sys-

tems is a practical and strategic step toward sustainable production. For manufacturers seeking sustainable power engineered to last, choosing a Mattei air compressor package to improve com-

pressed air efficiency may be one of the smartest investments on the plant floor.

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Efficiency that impacts the bottom line

Compressed air can represent a significant share of a facility's

helps facilities:

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The CX5300 Embedded PC provides significantly increased computing power and is available as either a 2-core or 4-core device (shown).

CX5300 Embedded PC series with latest generation Intel Atom® CPUs

THE new CX5300 Embedded PC series from Beckhoff uses Intel Atom® processors from the x6 series (Elkhart Lake), helping it to offer up to 60% more comput-

ing power than the proven CX5200 series.

Further application advantages result from the modern DisplayPort for HMI integration, as well as the UPS OCT-ca-

pable power supply unit and the capacitive 1-second UPS.

The CX5300 is a fanless embedded PC and is available in two device variants:

- CX5330: with x6214RE Intel Atom® processor (1.4 GHz, two cores)
- CX5340: with x6416RE Intel Atom® processor (1.7 GHz, four cores)

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The Beckhoff IoT controller

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CX8000 series
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CX9020 series
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CX2000 series
CPU: up to Intel® Core™ i7, quad-core



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In the basic configuration, the devices are equipped with 4 or 8 GB of DDR4 RAM, two independent, gigabit-capable Ethernet interfaces, as well as four USB 3.1 interfaces and one DisplayPort.

A wide range of additional connection options or gateway functions is available thanks to the optional interface, which can be fitted ex factory, and the I/O level, which can consist of either E-bus or K-bus terminals.

In addition, a system module or fieldbus module from the CX2000 series can be plugged in via the high-pole connection on the left-hand side of the device.

Furthermore, the CX5300 is characterised by an internally electrically isolated power supply unit with UPS OCT capability, the built-in capacitive 1-second UPS for persistent data storage, and low power consumption.

For more information contact Beckhoff Automation (Pty) Ltd, +27 11 795 2898, info@beckhoff.co.za, www.beckhoff.com

Mpact paper mill faces closure

MPACT has initiated a formal retrenchment process at its paper mill in Springs, raising the prospect of the facility's closure and placing hundreds of jobs at risk.

The company has authorised Section 189A consultations, the legally mandated process preceding large-scale retrenchments. Approximately 377 employees at the Springs operation could be affected if the closure proceeds.

Mpact is one of southern Africa's largest paper, packaging and recycling groups, employing more than 4,500 people across its operations. The business traces its origins back to 1877 and was separately listed in 2011 following its de-merger from Mondi.

New Automation Technology **BECKHOFF**

Plastics SA launches new pilot podcast series – to amplify industry voice

PLASTICS SA is proud to announce the launch of an exciting new pilot podcast series titled *Plastics Matter*, a dynamic platform created to give the South African plastics industry a stronger, more direct voice in conversations that shape its future.

As the recognised representative body for the local plastics industry, Plastics SA has long served as a mouthpiece for its members — advocating for sound policy, promoting sustainability and sharing credible industry insights. Anton Hanekom, Executive Director of Plastics SA, explains that the launch of *Plastics Matter* is a natural extension of this vision.

"Each episode will feature expert guests and industry leaders who bring insight, data and practical experience to the table."

"Our purpose at Plastics SA is to be the voice of the plastics industry in South Africa. With *Plastics Matter*, we are hoping to create a platform where critical issues impacting our industry can be discussed openly and constructively. It allows us to engage not only with our members, but also with government, stakeholders, and the broader public in a transparent and meaningful way."

Giving a voice to the local plastics industry on topics that matter

The podcast series will tackle a wide range of topical and sometimes challenging issues — ranging from waste management and recycling performance to policy developments, innovation, sustainability and economic trends. Each episode will feature expert guests and industry leaders who bring insight, data and practical experience to the table.

Robust and relevant engagement

The first inaugural episode addresses one of the country's most pressing concerns: South Africa's broken waste management system. Joining Hanekom

in studio is Bala Nengovhela, Specialist: Waste Management at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Together, they explore the systemic challenges facing municipalities,

the realities on the ground and what needs to change to build a more effective and sustainable waste management framework.

"Through this podcast, we want to unpack the facts, share real

data and have solution-driven conversations that move the industry forward. *Plastics Matter* because the industry matters. The facts matter and the future matters. We invite everyone to join the con-

versation," concludes Hanekom.

For more information and to watch the first episodes, visit <http://www.plasticsinfo.co.za> or follow *Plastics SA* on social media.



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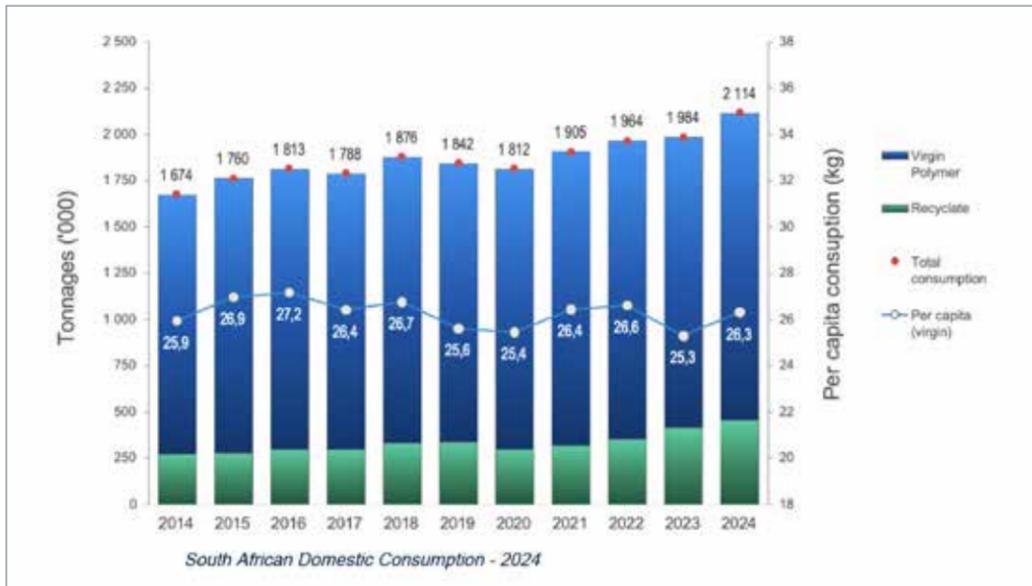
POLYMER CODE	PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	RECYCLED INTO
 PET		Bottles for cooldrink, milk, detergent, juice and mineral water and food containers	
 PE-HD		Bottles for milk, juice and shampoo, bags, household containers, film and crates	
 PVC		Clear packaging: toiletries, food, medication, bottles and cling film	
 PE-LD		Bags for frozen vegetables, food, garbage and retail, milk sachets and soft bottles	
 PP		Bottle tops and closures, yoghurt cups, margarine tubs and ice cream containers	
 PS		Yoghurt cups, clamshells Food trays: meat, fruit and vegetables, cups	
 SPECIFY MATERIALS		In packaging it could be multi-layer materials such as refill pouches	



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South Africa used more recycled plastics in 2024



PLASTICS SA, the umbrella body representing the South African plastics industry, has released its latest annual plastics consumption and recycling figures for the year ending December 2024. The results offer an encouraging outlook despite persistent challenges within South Africa's waste management system and significant economic and operational pressures that had to be overcome by recyclers.

Anton Hanekom, Executive Director of Plastics SA, acknowledges that the 2025/2026 figures might paint a different story once all the data has been collected and verified.

"The purpose of Plastics SA is to collectively enhance the South African plastics industry's long-term growth and sustainability. Each year, we compile this report by conducting in-person interviews with raw material producers and plastic reprocessors (recyclers) across the country, ensuring that the data is accurate, verified and truly reflective of what is happening on the ground," Hanekom says.

South Africa in the global context

In global terms, South Africa's virgin plastics consumption represents approximately 0.4% of total global plastics consumption. However,

South Africa remains the largest plastics industry in Sub-Saharan Africa, supplying products to neighbouring countries both directly and indirectly through local manufacturers.

One of the most significant findings from the 2024 data is the continued shift towards recycled content. "Over the last ten years, virgin plastics consumption grew by 18%, while recyclate consumption increased by an impressive 67%. This clearly shows that local reprocessors and manufacturers are actively supporting the transition towards a more circular plastics economy," Hanekom explains.

Where plastics are used in South Africa

The packaging sector remains the largest consumer of plastics in South Africa, accounting for 49.4% of total plastics use, across both flexible and rigid applications. This is followed by building and construction (13.2%) and agriculture (10%).

"South Africa lacks a strong non-packaging plastics sector. Engineering, industrial and customised plastic products have the potential to generate higher margins and greater economic value. Yet we continue to import large volumes of finished plastic goods – including

floor, wall and ceiling coverings, sheets, films, boxes, crates and builders' ware – that could be manufactured locally to stimulate employment and local procurement," Hanekom notes.

Key recycling highlights for 2024

- South Africa's mechanical plastics recycling rate reached 28.4%, placing the country well above the global average and ahead of many developed economies when it comes to mechanical recycling.
- Total plastics recycled increased to 471 000 tonnes in 2024, continuing a steady upward trend over the past five years.
- Circular plastics content in new products rose to 22%, compared to just 16% a decade ago.
- Recycling volumes increased for most polymers.
- Post-industrially sourced recyclable waste increased from 17% in 2023 to 24% in 2024, reflecting greater recovery of cleaner waste directly from generators such as farms, contractors and distribution centres, rather than from landfill.
- End-markets for

recycled plastics are becoming increasingly diverse. Key sectors include flexible packaging (28%), clothing and footwear (12%), and agriculture (10%), alongside applications in building and construction, furniture, toys and leisure products. No single market sector relies on only one material. Instead, recycled polymers are used across a wide range of end-markets, each selected to meet specific performance and fit-for-purpose requirements.

While South Africa's recycling performance compares favourably with many countries, it remains highly dependent on manual collection and sorting, largely driven by waste pickers and small-to-medium recycling businesses. "The recycling value chain in South Africa is long, fragmented and costly, largely due to inefficiencies in waste collection and sorting. Although this model delivers impressive recovery rates, it is also highly vulnerable," Hanekom explains.

Furthermore, recycling growth is increasingly constrained by South Africa's failing municipal waste management system, with an estimated 36% of households still lacking regular waste removal services.

South Africa has proven that it can recycle. What we now need is a waste management system that works, markets that value recyclate, and policies that enable long-term investment in the circular economy so that this vital industry can continue to grow," Hanekom concludes.

The Executive Summary as well as the full Plastics SA 2024 industry data report is available at www.plasticsinfo.co.za

RS South Africa aligns with a global shift in sustainable packaging



By prioritising alternative materials, RS moves towards a more circular responsible packaging model.

RS South Africa is aligning with a global drive to reduce plastic waste as part of the Plastic Out programme led by the RS Group. The initiative forms a key pillar of the Group's 2030 ESG action plan, which aims to reduce emissions, minimise waste, and transform packaging across its international operations and value chain.

As customer expectations around sustainability continue to rise, RS is rethinking how packaging is designed, sourced and used, ensuring that environmental responsibility goes hand in hand with operational efficiency and product protection. For South African customers, this global programme provides access to proven, scalable approaches to more sustainable packaging that support their own ESG ambitions.

Global Plastic Out initiatives setting the benchmark

Across RS Group's international distribution network, several major packaging innovations have already been implemented. These initiatives serve as global best-practice examples, as illustrated below, that inform packaging strategy across all regions, including South Africa.

Bio-based polymer carriers for electronics: One of the most significant milestones in the Plastic Out programme has been the introduction of bio-based polymer carriers for electronics distribution from RS Group's Corby site in the UK. Developed in partnership with Chestnut Biopolymers Ltd., the material is produced by fermenting sugars and blending them using patented technology to deliver strength

and durability without generating microplastic waste.

Since mid-2025, more than 100 000 biopolymer units have been deployed, replacing approximately 80% of conventional polypropylene packaging at the site. This marked the first time a bio-based carrier had been implemented at scale within RS Group.

Paper sealing tape for transit cartons: Another major step forward has been the introduction of paper-based sealing tape at RS Group's Bad Hersfeld and Beauvais distribution centres in Europe. Developed in partnership with Tesa, the FSC-certified tape allows cartons to be recycled without the need to remove plastic sealing, improving recyclability while maintaining operational efficiency and a high-quality unboxing experience.

Plastic infill removal from packaging: RS Group has also replaced traditional plastic infill materials with paper-based alternatives across applicable packing areas in the UK. The initiative has removed an estimated 15 tonnes of plastic, while maintaining packaging integrity and ensuring products arrive safely and securely. The paper infill contains 50% recycled content, is FSC certified and has been designed to integrate seamlessly into existing packing processes.

What this means for South Africa

By drawing on global experience and proven solutions, RS South Africa can assess how similar principles can be applied locally, considering market needs, operational requirements and national sus-

tainability priorities.

"Sustainable packaging is no longer optional, it's essential. At RS South Africa, we are accelerating this transition by implementing solutions that have already demonstrated success globally, ensuring our customers can rely on packaging that is both responsible and efficient," says De Wet Joubert, Operations & Strategic Projects Director at RS South Africa.



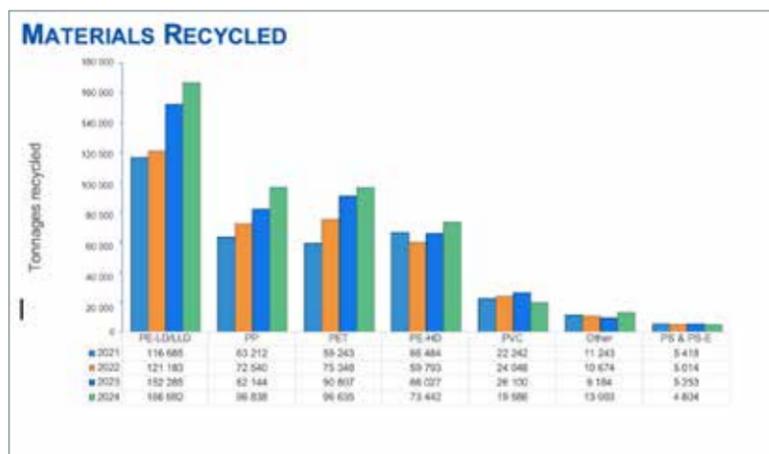
DeWet Joubert, Operations & Strategic Projects Director, RS South-Africa.

Looking ahead

The Plastic Out programme highlights the impact of collaboration across teams, regions and supply-chain partners in driving meaningful progress on sustainability. For RS South Africa, alignment with this global strategy ensures local customers benefit from innovation, expertise and continuous improvement as packaging solutions evolve.

By prioritising alternative materials, reducing unnecessary plastic and embedding sustainability into operational decision-making, RS continues to move towards a more circular, responsible packaging model that supports both business performance and environmental stewardship.

<https://za.rs-online.com/web/>



Innovative solution for packaging operations: Turning bottlenecks into profits



Juan-Eric Davidtz demonstrates the company's game-changing can turner for high volume conveyor applications.

A simply engineered low-cost component used to reorient cans and containers has the potential to significantly boost production and offer unparalleled return on investment for packaging operations across southern Africa. Manufactured by polymer specialist, igus, the 3D-printed product turner is designed for high-volume packaging environ-

ments to reorient cans and containers for downstream processing. These processes operate under continuous load and friction where traditional parts wear quickly, leading to stoppages and driving maintenance costs higher. The solution from igus uses tribologically-optimised polymers called iglidur i150 Tribo-Filament, which is highly

wear-resistant and can be 3D-printed on demand for end-use applications.

According to Juan-Eric Davidtz of igus, the material is specially engineered for high abrasion resistance with excellent strength and mechanical properties. Unlike standard PLA or ABS polymers, the iglidur i150's engineered compound also contains solid lubricants that enable it to run dry with no external lubrication, while offering significantly longer service life in sliding and rotating applications. The material's inherent wear resistance means that these critical elements retain dimensional stability far longer than conventional printed plastics, reducing part replacements and extending maintenance intervals.

"We have demonstration models that we are showing across the region in different industries wherever products need to be turned," says Davidtz. "Although our demonstration models are designed to reorient aluminium cans and PET containers on high-speed conveyors,

we are also able to work with clients to develop solutions for their packaging needs wherever they require them.

"With it being 3D printed, it unlocks fast prototyping and rapid scale-up from prototype to production-grade part which is a big advantage in these fast-paced manufacturing environments. Importantly for food and beverage packaging lines, our iglidur i150 is compliant with EU Regulation 10/2011 for food contact applications when appropriately specified," says Davidtz.

He adds that the solution interfaces perfectly with the company's own 3D printing service which supports a wide range of motion and wear parts, from plain bearings and gears to custom rollers in igus materials that offer lubrication-free and maintenance-free performance. For packaging engineers, the ability to print mechanically strong abrasion resistant parts on demand can significantly improve processes and reduce downtime.

<https://www.igus.co.za/>

The waste management strategy that could change how every business handles its rubbish



By Adrian Ephraim

SOUTH Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment published the Draft National Waste Management Strategy 2026 for public comment in December 2025, and its headline ambition is stark: divert 40% of waste from landfill within five years.

Given that the country currently recycles or recovers only around 10% of its total waste stream, the gap between aspiration and reality is enormous.

Keith Anderson, CEO of the e-Waste Association of South Africa (eWASA) and newly elected chairman of the PRO Alliance South Africa (PASA), is blunt about what it will take. "Eleven to 40% in five years - anything is possible, but it requires certain things to get there." Chief among them is municipalities stepping up. "You'd have to see an uptake in large-scale separation-at-source rollout by municipalities, because they are the key driver in terms of the collection point at volume across the country. They have the single biggest role to play, but they have to take ownership. It is theirs to take ownership of."

Anderson also questions the baseline data underpinning the strategy. The current recycling figure stems from the Department's 2018 State of Waste report. With five years of EPR reporting now available, he argues the government should update its numbers: "You've now got five years of fact-based data from the various PROs. Surely that data is very

different to what you've been putting out. Tell us what it is, and we base our targets on that."

The enforcement gap nobody's talking about

Since EPR regulations came into effect in November 2021, not a single producer has been fined for non-compliance, despite a maximum penalty of R5 million. Anderson says the reason only emerged recently. "I was absolutely gobsmacked. A department official told us, 'We've only just discovered that we are not in a position legally to issue a fine. We have to get a bill signed and passed through parliament first, and we're working to get that done by the end of the year.' Can you believe it?"

The enforcement vacuum has enabled what Anderson calls "free riders", producers who have not registered with a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO). "There are free riders, and how many there are, I can't tell you, but is it a lot?"

Construction waste and e-waste: the next frontiers

The draft strategy and associated EPR amendments target several new waste streams, including construction and demolition (C&D) waste and motor vehicles. Anderson says the practical compliance for the construction sector will require mandatory site waste management plans, onsite material separation, dedicated C&D recycling facilities, and public procurement rules favouring recycled aggregates. "It's amazing around the world what's been done

with C&D aggregate - roads, dams, the list is growing. But without demand for recycled construction materials, diversion rates will remain limited."

C&D waste is what the industry calls a "negative fraction" - it holds no inherent commercial value, making EPR fee design critical. "The higher the level of contamination, the higher the fee becomes. It's finding the sweet spot where there's an incentive to do it properly without killing the business."

On the e-waste side, Anderson flags lithium batteries as the most pressing concern, particularly end-of-life EV battery packs. He sees a significant opportunity in repurposing batteries that have degraded to 80% capacity - the manufacturer's threshold - but still have another decade of life as secondary power for schools or housing. "If you want to truly be part of the circular economy, you have to buy in and mitigate those risks. If we can prove there's an audit trail and the battery gets repurposed or recycled, then you should get credit for that."

Consolidation is coming

South Africa has approximately 60 registered PROs - a fragmentation Anderson calls "madness." His response is PASA, a cross-sector alliance already attracting PROs through shared project costs and economies of scale, with smaller PROs in merger talks with eWASA. For businesses still weighing their obligations, Anderson's message is simple: "Watch the space. And let's see."

Turning glass waste into sustainable value



GLASS is one of the most recyclable materials in the world, yet in South Africa too much of it still ends up in landfill. Every discarded bottle or jar represents not just waste but a missed opportunity to conserve resources, save energy and unlock new business opportunities.

"Unlike many materials, glass can be recycled indefinitely without losing quality," Francois Marais, Sales and Marketing Director at Pilot Crushtec, says. "Each time we recycle glass, we are not only reducing pressure on landfills but also helping industries save energy and cut car-

bon emissions."

Melting recycled glass - known as cullet - requires less heat than melting raw materials such as silica and limestone which translates into significant energy savings. At the same time, diverting glass from landfill helps reduce environmental risk; a win-win for both sustainability and industry.

The uses of recycled glass extend far beyond producing new bottles and jars. Cullet is a vital ingredient in manufacturing fibreglass for insulation, while in the construction sector crushed glass is increasingly being used as a substitute for

traditional aggregates in concrete and asphalt.

"There is a growing market for glass in construction and infrastructure," Marais explains. "Crushed glass can strengthen road bases, add aesthetic value to concrete surfaces and even contribute to eco-friendly brick production. This opens real opportunities for businesses to innovate and differentiate themselves."

Recycled glass is also gaining popularity in landscaping and decorative applications. Beyond its visual appeal, glass cullet is proving its worth as a filtration medium in water treatment plants and swimming pools, where it outperforms traditional sand. It's even used in reflective road markings to improve night-time visibility. These diverse applications show how glass recycling contributes to both everyday life and large scale environmental solutions.

Pilot Crushtec is sup-

porting this transition by making the processing of glass more accessible. Its range of modular crushing and screening plants allows waste glass to be efficiently converted into high quality cullet. These modular solutions are easy to deploy, cost effective and scalable, making them an attractive option for recyclers, municipalities and entrepreneurs who want to enter the growing glass recycling market.

"Glass recycling represents the perfect meeting point between sustainability and profitability," Marais says. "It creates jobs, drives innovation and provides industries with valuable raw materials. At Pilot Crushtec, we are committed to providing the equipment that makes this possible but the real transformation will come from a broader commitment across business and society to embrace recycling as both an environmental responsibility and a business opportunity."

Lubricant and feed gear pumps for heavy-duty lubrication systems



BMG's Steimel lubricant and feed gear pumps – the SF series – is used mainly on oil lube systems in mines, steel works, power stations and general industry.

BMG's Fluid Technology division continues to strengthen its lubrication systems offering to heavy industry in Africa, through the supply and technical support of a wide range of quality branded fluid technology equipment.

A key range of pumps supplied by BMG is the Steimel SF series lubricant and feed gear pumps, developed for continuous-duty oil circulation, transfer and conditioning applications. These pumps are

widely used in oil lubrication systems, including kidney filtration circuits and oil transfer duties, where stable, pulsation-free flow is critical to system reliability and equipment protection.

Typical applications for Steimel gear pump technology are in mining, power generation, steel production and general industrial environments.

"The SF series has been designed to handle a wide range of lubricating oils, including

high-viscosity grades, ensuring smooth and quiet operation. The design allows for the efficient pumping of media with limited lubricity, provided chemical compatibility is ensured and solids are absent, making the pumps suitable for demanding industrial lubrication environments," explains Joe Pinheiro, BMG's National Product Manager, Pumps. "The SF range has a compact mechanical design that allows for easy disassembly and reassembly, to ensure effortless maintenance in the field.

"Steimel SF pumps are supplied by BMG with clockwise rotation as standard. This can be reversed by repositioning the end cover plate, simultaneously changing the delivery flow direction. For added system protection, an adjustable pressure relief valve can be integrated into the pump housing to safeguard

against pressure surges."

In standard configurations, SF pumps operate at rotational speeds up to 1 800 rpm, supporting viscosities up to 380 cSt at differential pressures of 25 bar.

In more demanding applications, these pumps are able to handle media with viscosities ranging from 5 to 50 000 cSt and withstand temperatures between -40 °C and +250 °C, with permissible speeds adjusted according to fluid characteristics. BMG also offers ATEX-certified SF pumps for use in potentially explosive environments.

Operational stability is enhanced through precision integration of pinions and gear wheels, reducing internal tolerances and contributing to low-noise, low-pulsation performance. The use of 12-tooth gear wheels further minimises de-

livery fluctuations, while composite bearing bushes ensure continuous operation and extended service life. In applications which impose higher mechanical loads, pump sizes can be configured with anti-friction bearings at the drive end to accommodate combined radial and axial forces.

To enhance the SF series, BMG supplies Steimel T-series feed pumps, which are rotary gear pumps, designed for the transfer of different media, at pressures up to 16 bar and rotational speeds

up to 1 500 rpm. In addition, Steimel Model B pumps are available for applications involving highly fluid media, like waste oils, greases, hydraulic and hardening oils, resins and thermal oils. These units offer excess pressure capability up to 50 bar, with displacements ranging from 2 to 75 cm³ per revolution.

The BMG Fluid Technology team provides a technical advisory service focused on correct pump selection and system integration for specific operating conditions. This ca-

pability is supported by a spares and maintenance service and a distribution network across South Africa and into neighbouring territories, including Zambia, the DRC, Eswatini, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania.

For further information contact Joe Pinheiro, BMG's National Product Manager, Pumps
Mobile: +27 82 852 9894 Tel: +27 11 620-7372 Email: josep@bmgworld.net Website: www.bmgworld.net

Letšeng Diamonds increases uptime, efficiency and sustainability with Volvo machines supported by Babcock



"They track machine performance and alert us when something needs attention. Even when not used continuously, that extra layer of support adds value."

Efficiency supporting sustainability

As part of the Gem Diamonds Group, Letšeng is focused on reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency. Fuel consumption plays a key role in this strategy.

"The Volvo equipment has delivered higher productivity with lower fuel burn," says Scheepers. "These efficiencies are tangible, supporting both our sustainability goals and our cost base."

A partnership delivering value

Beyond performance metrics, Scheepers highlights the strength of the partnership between Letšeng, Volvo and Babcock. "The machines are comfortable, operators are satisfied, and the overall cost of ownership — including maintenance, fuel efficiency and uptime — has been excellent. Combined with competitive pricing, it's a solution that makes sense."

Letšeng's experience highlights the impact of strong OEM-dealer partnerships in mining. With Babcock's technical expertise and support network, the operation has achieved measurable gains in productivity, efficiency and long-term value.

LETŠENG Diamonds, one of the world's leading producers of large, high-value rough diamonds, has reported strong performance gains following the introduction of Volvo machines at its Lesotho operation. Supported by Babcock, the exclusive Volvo Construction Equipment dealer in southern Africa, the fleet has delivered improved reliability, reduced fuel consumption and a lower total cost of ownership.

Operating in the Matluli Mountains, Letšeng faces extreme altitude, harsh weather and demanding production conditions. For Director of Operations Gideon Scheepers, selecting the right equipment partner was critical.

"Babcock took the time to understand our environment and ensure the machines were correctly specified for altitude and operating conditions," he says. "That gave us confidence that the solution was tailored, not generic."

Reliability driving production

The Volvo machines are deployed in primary production, feeding

run-of-mine ore into the processing plants. In this environment, uptime is directly linked to revenue.

"Reliability has been excellent," says Scheepers. "The machines are performing as expected and supporting our production targets. Downtime equals lost production, so uptime is critical."

Babcock's regional expertise also influenced the decision. "Their Bloemfontein team understands our requirements and consistently delivers strong support."

Responsive support on site

Scheepers describes Babcock's aftermarket service as "excellent all round", citing dependable parts availability, skilled technicians and rapid response times.

"Whenever we've needed parts or technical assistance, the response has been fast. That gives us confidence in the long-term performance of the fleet."

While Letšeng maintains its own maintenance systems, it also benefits from Volvo's telematics and Babcock's remote monitoring.

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Trafo Power Solutions positions early-stage design as mining growth lever

AS South Africa's mining sector faces mounting pressure to improve efficiency, scale production and manage capital expenditure, electrical infrastructure design is emerging as a critical factor in long-term project viability.

ing director David Claassen, mining's inherently dynamic nature – where equipment layouts shift and load requirements evolve – demands a more forward-looking approach to electrical infrastructure. “Mining operations

to retrofit or upgrade.”

Planning beyond the feasibility study

The company increasingly becomes involved at the concept or pre-feasibility stage, sometimes even before formal fea-

dicative costing quickly, helping developers model different infrastructure scenarios before major capital allocations are locked in.

Early engagement allows the company to influence foundational decisions such as transformer sizing, substation placement and modular configurations. Instead of specifying equipment purely for immediate load requirements, designs are aligned with life-of-mine plans.

In practical terms, that could mean recommending a higher-capacity transformer that fits within the same footprint as a smaller unit, reducing the need for disruptive and expensive upgrades later.

Modular shift gains momentum

A key trend shaping infrastructure decisions is the growing preference for containerised modular substations. Unlike traditional brick-and-

mortar builds, modular substations can be relocated as mining operations expand or shift. This flexibility is particularly relevant for open-pit mines that progressively move across an ore body, as well as underground operations where layouts evolve over time.

Skid-mounted and mobile substations reduce civil works requirements and allow phased expansions, helping mines better manage upfront capital costs while retaining scalability.

Industry analysts note that as commodity cycles become more volatile, flexibility in capital-intensive infrastructure is increasingly viewed as a strategic advantage rather than a technical detail.

Infrastructure as competitive advantage

South Africa's mining industry remains a significant contributor to GDP and export earnings, but operators are under sustained



David Claassen, Managing Director of Trafo Power Solutions, continues to drive the company's growth in supplying customised dry-type transformer solutions.



Designed specifically for mining applications, the Trafo Power Solutions mini substation demonstrates its durable construction and dependable performance in tough operating conditions.

Stellenbosch-based Trafo Power Solutions says early-stage involvement in mining projects is enabling operators to avoid costly redesigns and operational disruptions later in a mine's lifecycle.

According to manag-

rarely remain static,” Claassen says. “Equipment moves, expansion phases accelerate, and power demands increase. If the original electrical design doesn't anticipate that, operators end up paying significantly more

sibility studies begin. At this point, mining houses typically require high-level cost estimates to shape early investment decisions.

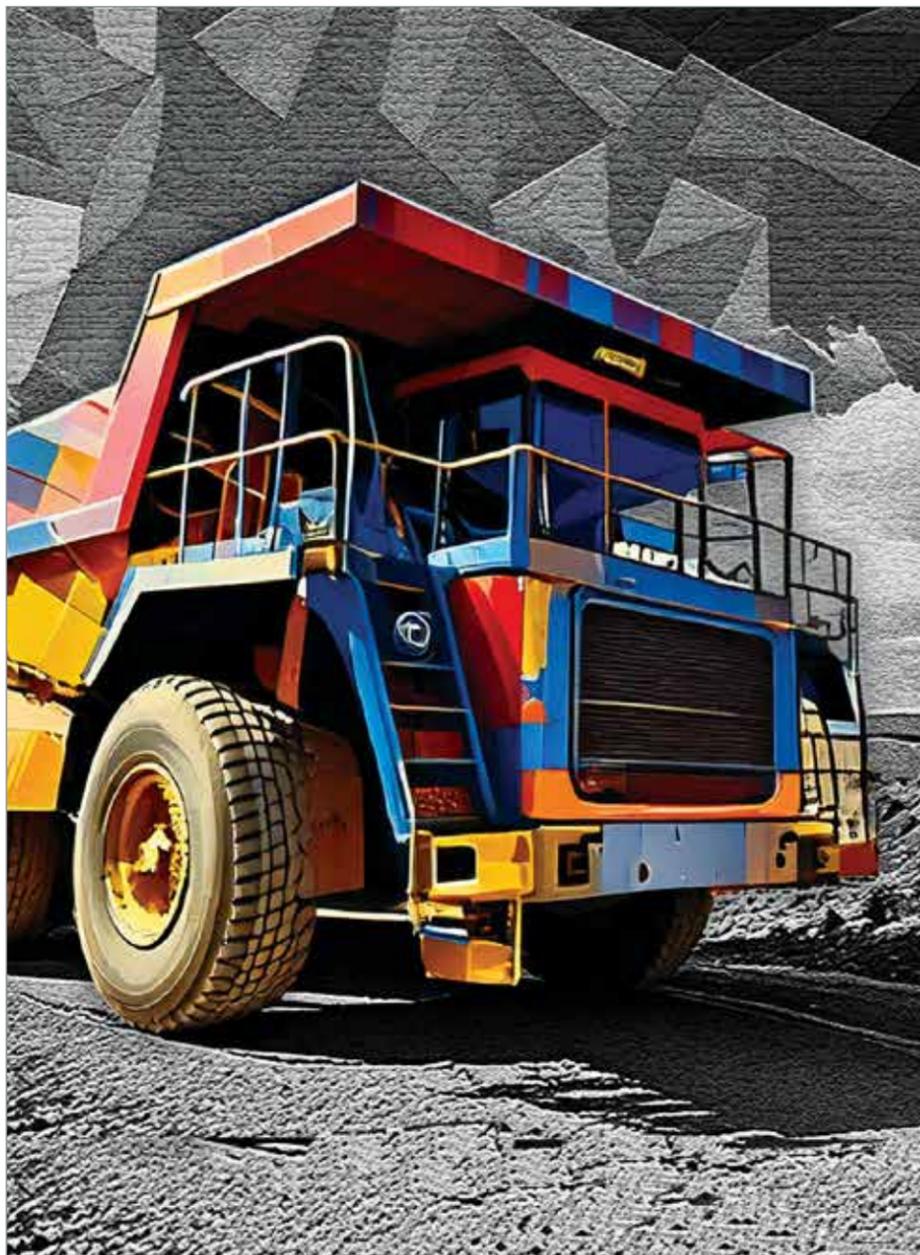
By leveraging data from its installed base, Trafo can provide in-

pressure from energy instability, regulatory uncertainty and cost inflation. In this context, infrastructure decisions that minimise future redesigns can materially affect project economics.

By focusing on life-cycle-aligned electrical design, Trafo Power Solutions is positioning infrastructure not merely as a compliance requirement, but as a lever for operational resilience and growth. “Our responsibility

is to make sure the infrastructure we supply continues supporting clients long into the future,” Claassen says. “If production increases, if layouts change, the power system should not be the constraint.”

As mining companies pursue new projects and brownfield expansions across Southern Africa, early-stage infrastructure planning may prove to be one of the quieter – but more decisive – drivers of long-term competitiveness.



Mining runs on precision and the pursuit of productivity

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What if your protection relay could explain what changed - not just when to trip?



ACROSS South Africa's industrial landscape, electrical panels quietly sustain the systems that keep mines operating, water moving, and factories producing. For decades, the protection relay inside those panels performed a singular role: disconnect equipment when a fault occurred. But as power networks become more complex, that simple mandate is evolving.

The growth of renewable energy, increased use of variable-speed drives, and ageing grid infrastructure have introduced new operating stresses into electrical systems. Voltage dips, harmonic distortion, uneven loading and repeated start conditions are now common realities. In this environment, understanding why equipment fails is becoming almost as important as preventing the failure itself — a shift driving interest in a new generation of

intelligent motor and feeder protection relays.

Locally designed compact relays, such as the KG/KH range, illustrate this change. Built for low-voltage motors and feeder circuits, these DIN-rail-mounted units combine traditional protection with continuous operational insight. They retain a comprehensive ANSI-based protection suite, including thermal overload (49), phase unbalance (46), instantaneous and time overcurrent (50/51), locked-rotor detection during start and running (51LS/51LR), and under-power monitoring (37), addressing both electrical faults and mechanical failures such as stalled pumps or broken couplings. Voltage and supply-related risks — including under- and over-voltage (27/59), phase sequence errors (47), loss of power (78V) and frequency

deviation (81U/81O) — are also monitored alongside earth-fault and insulation protection (50G/51G and 64).

What increasingly distinguishes these relays, however, is their power quality monitoring capability. Rather than acting only after a failure, modern devices measure current, voltage and power continuously while tracking running hours, start frequency and energy consumption. Embedded spectrum analysis can detect harmonics deep into the waveform, quantifying distortion and reporting total harmonic distortion across phases. This supports a practical operating philosophy often described as “protect or warn”: distortion can be trended, alarms can be raised when thresholds are exceeded, and trips can be enforced where equipment sensitivity requires intervention.

In practice, this transforms protection into an evidence-based process. Time-stamped fault and event records create a repeatable history of operating conditions, enabling maintenance teams to correlate trips with supply instability, thermal stress or mechanical load behaviour. Rather than troubleshooting by assumption, operators gain visibility into what changed before a failure occurred.

Ease of access is another defining shift.

Bluetooth Low Energy connectivity allows technicians to view live operating values, retrieve trip information and adjust settings through a mobile application without opening the panel door. This workflow — scanning for the device, connecting via BLE and interacting with the relay using the same configuration logic as desktop software — reduces commissioning friction and enables rapid diagnostics in live or hazardous environments. In many cases, it also allows Modbus-based communication paradigms to be extended wirelessly, maintaining familiar integration approaches while improving accessibility.

The commissioning sequence itself reflects this broader philosophy. Protection configuration is no longer an isolated task but part of a structured process: establishing measurement accuracy, defining protection curves and thermal memory behaviour, validating harmonic thresholds, and confirming event logging before the system enters service. A defined validation checklist ensures that monitoring, alarms and trip actions operate according to site policy — reinforcing the distinction between conditions that require intervention and those that require awareness.

Importantly, these relays are not always

installed purely as replacements for legacy protection. Many facilities deploy them alongside existing systems to gain visibility into feeder performance or motor loading trends.

This layered approach often reveals recurring issues — repeated start stress, unstable supply conditions or mechanical inefficiencies — that traditional protection alone could not explain.

As South Africa's electrical environment continues to evolve, the expectation placed on protection devices is changing with it. Protection remains fundamental, but insight is becoming operationally critical. The ability to quantify stress, understand supply behaviour and standardise troubleshooting across teams is shifting the relay's role from reactive safeguard to diagnostic platform.

For operators navigating unpredictable power conditions, the central question is no longer only how to protect equipment, but how to understand what it is experiencing. And increasingly, that understanding may be the most valuable form of protection.

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Mining input cost inflation slows to 1.7% in January, but Iran conflict poses fresh risks



INPUT cost inflation in South Africa's mining sector eased at the start of 2026, offering some relief for producers after a modest increase toward the end of last year.

"The outbreak of war involving Iran may push oil prices higher and weaken the rand, potentially increasing the cost of imported inputs and reversing the recent easing in mining input cost inflation."

The Minerals Council South Africa's Mining Composite Input (MCI) Cost Index showed input cost inflation slowed to 1.7% year-on-year in January 2026, down from 2.6% in December. The figure is broadly in line with the average recorded during 2025 and marks a reversal of the upward trend seen late

last year, when inflation peaked at 2.8% in October.

The moderation was largely driven by declines in several major input categories. Prices for other chemicals and man-made fibres fell by 10.1% year-on-year, while imported intermediate inputs dropped by 8.3%. Finance, insurance, real estate and business services declined by 6.8%, and coke and refined petroleum products fell by 4.1%. These categories together account for roughly one-third of total mining input costs.

However, several key expenses continue to rise. Electricity costs increased by 17.5% year-on-year in January, while water costs climbed by 11.6%. Mining and quarrying intermediate inputs rose by 12.4%, and transport and storage costs increased by 5%. Although these categories represent a smaller share of overall input costs, they remain important cost drivers for mining operations.

Cost inflation also varied across commodities. Input cost inflation for platinum group metals eased to 2.7% year-on-year, down from 3.3% in December, bringing it broadly in line with gold. Coal and iron ore producers recorded the lowest levels of input cost inflation.

Looking ahead, economists expect relatively subdued cost pressures in the near term, supported by a firm rand, stable oil prices and unchanged interest rates.

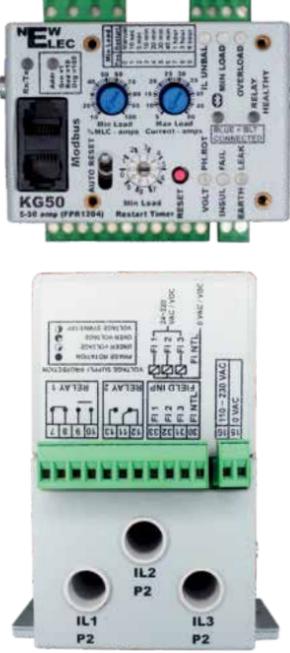
However, geopolitical tensions could pose risks. The outbreak of war involving Iran at the end of February may push oil prices higher and weaken the rand, potentially increasing the cost of imported inputs and reversing the recent easing in mining input cost inflation.

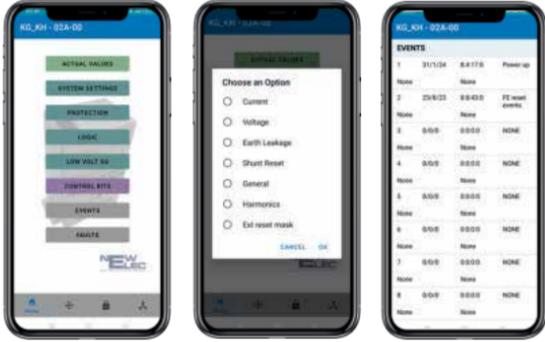


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ANSI 86RST - Lockout Reset
ANSI 86L Lockout Logic

ANSI 66 - Starts per Hour Control
ANSI THD - Harmonics Monitor
ANSI 47 - Phase-Sequence Voltage
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African mining accelerates adoption of artificial intelligence

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping Africa's mining sector, with companies increasingly deploying advanced data analytics, automation and digital modelling tools to improve productivity, safety and exploration success.

Across the continent, mining firms are turning to AI-powered systems to analyse vast geological datasets, identify new mineral deposits and optimise production processes. The technology is helping companies unlock new resources while reducing operational costs and environmental impact.

One of the most significant applications of AI is in mineral exploration, where machine learning algorithms can process geological and geophysical data far faster than traditional methods. By analysing large volumes of historical exploration data, AI systems can identify patterns that point to previously overlooked mineral deposits, improving discovery rates and helping

companies focus their exploration efforts more effectively.

The use of AI is also accelerating exploration timelines. Advanced geospatial technologies such as satellite imaging, drone surveys and AI-powered geological modelling are enabling miners to identify promising targets more quickly and with greater accuracy. In some cases, these digital tools have reduced exploration timelines significantly, allowing companies to move faster from discovery to development.

Operational efficiency is another major driver of AI adoption. Mining companies are increasingly using AI to optimise equipment performance, monitor production metrics and predict maintenance requirements. Predictive maintenance systems can detect potential equipment failures before they occur, allowing operators to schedule repairs and minimise costly downtime.

These improvements

are already delivering measurable benefits. Early adopters have reported notable reductions in operating costs, while also extending the lifespan of critical mining equipment and infrastructure. By improving reliability and reducing unexpected shutdowns, AI-driven systems can significantly enhance the profitability of large-scale operations.

In South Africa, AI is beginning to play a role in modernising mining operations as companies adopt digital technologies to improve performance and safety. AI-driven monitoring tools are being used to track production data in real time, enabling operators to make faster and more informed decisions about plant performance and resource management.

Large mining companies are also integrating digital technologies into core operations. Data-driven modelling tools are being used to map ore bodies more accurately, optimise



blasting strategies and improve the scheduling of equipment across mining sites. These capabilities allow for more precise extraction of resources while reducing waste and energy consumption.

Beyond productivity gains, AI is also improving safety across mining operations. Autonomous vehicles, automated drilling systems and remote monitoring

technologies are increasingly being deployed to reduce human exposure to hazardous environments. By shifting workers away from high-risk areas, companies can improve safety outcomes while maintaining operational efficiency.

Looking ahead, digital transformation is expected to accelerate across the sector as mining companies compete for critical miner-

als needed in the global energy transition. Technologies such as digital twins, augmented reality and advanced data analytics are likely to play a growing role in mine planning and operations.

However, industry leaders caution that widespread AI adoption will also require new skills and workforce development. As automation increases, many

roles will shift from manual labour to data analysis, systems oversight and remote operations management.

With mineral-rich African countries seeking to maximise the value of their resources, AI is increasingly being viewed as a strategic tool that can boost efficiency, improve safety and help the continent remain competitive in the global mining industry.

Exxaro clinches BEE Deal of the Year for R11.67bn manganese transaction



EXXARO Resources has been named the winner of the BEE Deal of the Year at the 2025 DealMakers Annual Awards, recognising its landmark R11.67 billion acquisition of manganese assets from Nt-simbintle Holdings and OMH — a transaction that marks a significant shift in South Africa's mining landscape.

The Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed diversified miner beat out other shortlisted transactions following adjudication by an independent panel, which evaluated deals on transformational impact, execution complexity, innovation in structuring, regulatory considerations, and the advancement of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE).

The transaction, described as the first of its kind in the manganese sector, brings together two of South Africa's

largest black-empowered mining companies under a single deal framework. For Exxaro, it represents a strategic pivot toward energy transition metals — a growth pillar that sits alongside its dominant coal business, an expanding energy solutions division, and equity-accounted investments in iron ore and base metals including zinc.

CEO Ben Magara said the award reflected deliberate portfolio reshaping with transformation at its core. "This transaction brings together two large successful BEE mining companies in South Africa, showcasing how collaboration, shared goals and innovative structuring can deliver both meaningful transformation and strong commercial outcomes," he said.

The deal was not without complexity. Execution required multi-layered structuring,

regulatory approvals across several jurisdictions, and coordinated engagement with a broad stakeholder base. Exxaro and its advisors navigated these challenges while maintaining what the company described as "strategic clarity" — a hallmark of its Sustainable Growth and Impact strategy.

Beyond the commercial rationale, the transaction is designed to deepen empowerment participation and deliver sustainable economic inclusion, positioning Exxaro as a leader in transformation beyond mere compliance. The company says the structure enhances long-term value through strengthened partnerships and broadened ownership.

The transaction, excluding the Mokala mine component, became unconditional at the end of January 2026. Exxaro anticipates full conclusion of the deal on or before 27 February 2026.

The DealMakers Annual Awards are widely regarded as the benchmark for corporate finance excellence in South Africa, making the recognition a significant endorsement of both the deal's commercial merit and its empowerment credentials.



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Africa's lifting industry gears up for second annual awards programme



ENTRIES now open for the Southern African Lifting Awards as sector recognition drive gains momentum

The Awards are returning for a second edition, with organisers Lifting Africa confirming the event will take place on 30 October 2026 at the Birchwood Hotel & Conference Centre in Johannesburg.

The awards programme, which debuted last year as the only dedicated recognition initiative for Africa's lifting, rigging and materials-handling sectors, has moved quickly to establish itself as a fixture on the industry calendar. This year's edition will again bring together engineers, operators, manufacturers, service providers and senior decision-makers

for an evening of industry recognition and networking.

Entries are now open, with submissions closing on 31 July 2026.

The awards span 11 categories covering the breadth of the sector, from frontline skills recognition — including an Apprentice/Technician of the Year Award and Rising Star Award — through to Project of the Year, Innovation Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award. Categories also recognise excellence in safety and training, environmental performance, people development and engineering.

All entries will be assessed by an independent panel of industry experts, with judging criteria centred on innovation, measurable

impact, sustainability and contribution to the broader African lifting sector.

Lifting Africa is positioning the awards as a business development tool as much as a recognition platform, arguing that finalist and winner status provides ongoing commercial value — strengthening tender submissions, supporting marketing and PR campaigns, and improving stakeholder confidence.

The programme is open to individuals, SMEs and large corporates operating anywhere on the continent, a deliberate design choice aimed at ensuring the awards reflect the full spectrum of the industry rather than defaulting to established players.

The 2026 awards are supported by sponsors Yoke Industrial Corp, RiConnect and Electra Mining Africa. Additional sponsorship opportunities remain available.

Full entry criteria, category guidelines and registration details are available at www.liftingawards.co.za.

Condra Cranes marks 60 years with cash prize competition for oldest working crane

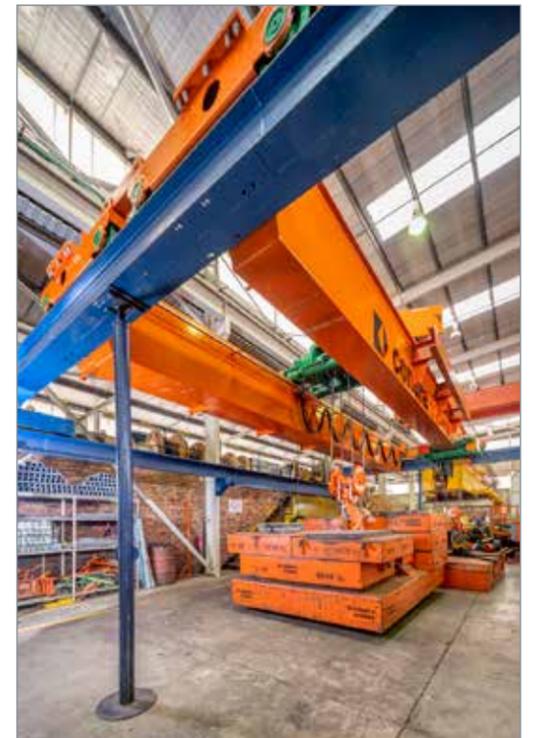
AS it approaches its diamond jubilee in 2026, South African crane manufacturer Condra is launching a nationwide competition to find the company's oldest working crane, highlighting the durability of its machines and the value of refurbishment.

The competition, which offers cash prizes for the three longest-working cranes discovered, is open to original Condra cranes, hoists, and refurbished machines. Entry is free and forms part of the company's celebrations of six decades in the lifting equipment industry.

always the best option," Kleiner said. "Refurbishment can deliver significant savings while allowing operators to continue using equipment they already know well."

According to Kleiner, refurbishing a crane offers two main advantages: immediate cost savings and the ability to retain equipment that operators are already familiar with, eliminating the need for retraining or changes to established production processes.

Condra typically requires about three weeks to complete a refurbishment, returning the crane to a high op-



"According to Kleiner, refurbishing a crane offers two main advantages: immediate cost savings and the ability to retain equipment that operators are already familiar with..."

Condra managing director Marc Kleiner said the initiative reflects the company's long-standing focus on durability and long-term value rather than simply encouraging customers to buy new equipment.

"Buying new is not

erating standard. Refurbished cranes carry a three-year warranty if serviced by Condra-authorized agents, or one year if serviced independently.

The company generally refurbishes its own machines, as spare parts for competing

crane brands are often difficult or expensive to source internationally. Condra manufactures all of its spare parts locally, enabling faster turnaround times and more cost-effective maintenance.

"If the crane is one of ours, refurbishment is usually worthwhile," Kleiner said. "New crane prices are around 60% higher today than they were ten years ago."

Refurbishment can include upgrades such as installing variable

frequency drives for adjustable speeds, increasing lifting capacity or span, and integrating modern automation systems. These upgrades can be applied across Condra's range, from standard workshop cranes to higher-performance Class 3 and Class 4 machines.

Kleiner noted that while some buyers opt for lower-priced imported cranes, these can prove costly over time when breakdowns occur and replacement parts are difficult to obtain.

"Where we remain highly competitive is in the total lifetime cost of the crane," he said. "Imported parts can be expensive and slow to source, which leads to downtime."

He added that production losses caused by crane failures are often overlooked in purchasing decisions.

"The purpose of an overhead crane is to move what the factory is producing. If the crane isn't working, the factory isn't producing — and it isn't making money," he said.

Condra was founded in 1966 as a general engineering company producing locally manufactured hoists. Crane production began in 1971. Today the company operates from a 22,000m² manufacturing facility in Germiston, with a second factory in Cape Town and subsidiary companies in Bulgaria and Chile.

Full details of the competition to find Condra's oldest crane are available on the company's website www.condra.co.za



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A doctor on deck: Telemedicine comes to the fishing industry



Dr Sage Gerdharee, a medical doctor and founder member of Ocean Doctor, discusses the contents and capability of the Doctor on Deck kit with Ohann Westraadt, skipper of the Sea Harvest vessel Laverne

A team of young South African doctors is harnessing rapid advances in communications technology to deliver professional medical care to fishing crews at sea, while helping vessel operators avoid operational downtime and costly diversions to port.

For fishing vessels operating far offshore, often for weeks at a time, access to medical care has always been a challenge. Often, a vessel's skipper must assess medical situations or potential emergencies with limited medical expertise and only basic equipment on hand. A new South African initiative aims to change that by bringing professional healthcare directly to vessels through telemedicine technology.

"The telemedicine system allows crew members to raise medical concerns privately and receive professional advice without leaving the vessel."

Ocean Doctor, a maritime healthcare solutions provider, has developed an integrated medical support system designed specifically for the fishing and maritime industries. The service combines portable diagnostic technology with 24/7 access to a dedicated team of qualified doctors, enabling skippers and crew members to consult medical professionals in real time while operating far from shore.

The system is built around what Ocean Doctor calls the Doc on Deck (DOD) kit, a portable telemedicine unit that enables skippers and senior officers

to conduct medical assessments and transmit data directly to doctors on shore. Designed for maritime conditions, the kit is housed in a rugged, portable case and includes a range of diagnostic tools such as a digital stethoscope, dermatoscope, otoscope, glucometer, pulse oximeter and blood pressure monitor. Together, these instruments enable non-medical crew members to capture diagnostic information which can be used by doctors to diagnose and treat a number of acute and chronic conditions.

With this information transmitted in real time, doctors can conduct remote consultations and advise skippers and senior officers on how to manage medical conditions on board. All that is required is a Wi-Fi connection, allowing the kit to function as a plug-and-play medical support solution for vessels at sea.

"Everything is easy to use," says Dr Sage Gerdharee, a medical doctor and founder member of Ocean Doctor. "With this basic suite of instruments we are able to diagnose conditions, monitor health and track illness among members of a fishing crew. Fishing vessels operate in environments where medical help is often days away. Our goal is to bring the doctor as close to the vessel as possible so that crews can receive professional medical advice when they need it."

Skippers can contact doctors via WhatsApp or telephone to obtain general medical advice, arrange consultations or discuss symptoms. Where necessary, a full telemedicine consultation can be scheduled.

If a crew member requires further care once the vessel returns to port, Ocean Doctor also offers dockside consultations, including follow-up appointments, chronic condition check-ups and treatment of minor injuries. The service can facilitate referrals for emergency care or specialised medical treatment.

Ocean Doctor addresses several long-standing operational challenges for vessel operators. Medical issues at sea can force vessels to return to port, resulting in costly disruptions to fishing operations.

The telemedicine system allows crew members to raise medical concerns privately and receive professional advice without leaving the vessel. This improved access to healthcare can provide peace of mind not only for crew members but also for their families, knowing their loved ones are cared for while working at sea.

Providing access to medical care at sea supports compliance with maritime health standards and international labour guidelines while demonstrating a commitment to crew welfare. Gerdharee notes that preventing even a single unnecessary return to port could potentially cover the cost of the DOD kit and several years of subscription services.

"Ocean Doctor sits at the intersection of maritime operations, risk mitigation and workplace sustainability, transforming the healthcare of fishing crews from a cost centre into a strategic operational asset," concludes Gerdharee.

Sea Harvest CEO takes stock at the start of the 2026 fishing year

IF there were a "G10" of global fishing nations, South Africa would qualify, says Felix Ratheb, CEO of Sea Harvest. He points to the prominent role South Africans now play in influential seafood and sustainability bodies – influence he believes far outweighs the size of the local industry. Yet he warns that misaligned domestic policy could undermine one of the country's most successful export sectors.

Ratheb chairs the Groundfish Forum, a global network of more than 300 senior seafood executives. Alongside other South African leaders serving in senior roles within the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and global harvest councils, he says the country is helping shape fisheries governance and sustainability standards worldwide.

"From a global perspective, we are everywhere," Ratheb says.

That global footprint has been critical for South Africa's hake industry, particularly in maintaining MSC certification, which has secured access to demanding European markets. What was once a "nice to have", he says, has become "a licence to operate".

Ratheb argues that fisheries globally suffer from fragmented representation, making it easy to conflate well-managed fisheries with poorly regulated ones.

He is unequivocal that sustainability is non-negotiable: "Without sustainable re-

sources, there can be no fishing businesses."

He contends that responsibly managed marine fisheries produce animal protein with a comparatively low environmental footprint. Research published in Reviews in Fisheries Science & Aquaculture estimates that replacing marine fisheries' animal protein with cattle and chicken would require about five million square kilometres of agricultural land.

The study also found terrestrial and freshwater species are more likely to be threatened with extinction than marine species, partly because agriculture transforms complex ecosystems into simplified systems, whereas well-managed fisheries operate within natural ecosystem structures.

For Ratheb, the priority is expanding sustainability across the sector. While he strongly supports the MSC, he cautions against raising certification standards to the point where only a small minority of fisheries can comply.

"Do you want five percent that are the best on the planet and spend a fortune complying, or do you bring more fisheries into the programme so you end up with more sustainable resources overall?" he asks.

A sweet spot for South African hake

Domestically, Ratheb says the hake fishery is in one of the strongest positions in its 125-year history,

driven largely by shifts in global whitefish markets. Hake competes with cod and haddock in Europe, but major quota cuts have reduced global cod catches by around 50% over the past two years. EU sanctions on Russian Pacific cod have further tightened supply.

The resulting shortage of wild-caught whitefish has driven sustained price growth, with South African producers seeing foreign-currency increases of more than 10% for two consecutive years. Limited exposure to the United States has insulated the industry from recent trade volatility, allowing volumes to be redirected into Europe and other high-demand markets.

Although catch rates declined unexpectedly over the past three years, scientific surveys showed the resource remained healthy. In 2025, catch rates rebounded by around 40%, confirming stock resilience.

The sector supports thousands of jobs, with most beneficiation taking place locally rather than offshore. Hake fillets and value-added products are produced on factory vessels and in shore-based plants, including facilities in rural areas where employment opportunities are scarce.

Yet Ratheb believes domestic policy risks undermining this momentum. The current 15-year fishing rights period, he argues, is misaligned with the scale of capital invest-



Felix Ratheb, CEO of Sea Harvest.

ment required. The average age of the trawl fleet is approaching 40 years, and replacing vessels can cost hundreds of millions of rand.

"People are not going to invest at that scale if they don't have security of tenure," he says.

The industry will argue in the upcoming review of the Marine Living Resources Act that rights allocations should be extended closer to 30 years to support long-term investment, employment and sustainability.

As South Africa enters the 2026 fishing year, Ratheb sees a stark contrast: globally, the country is helping shape the future of sustainable fishing; locally, policy uncertainty risks constraining a transformed, capital-intensive and globally competitive industry.

The risk, he says, is not collapse but missed opportunity. With strong markets, recovering stocks and deep local beneficiation, the hake fishery is well positioned for long-term returns – if domestic policy aligns with the long-term thinking South Africa promotes abroad.

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Maritime industry braces as P&I clubs withdraw conflict cover

THE global maritime industry is facing renewed uncertainty after several major Protection and Indemnity (P&I) clubs began withdrawing war-risk insurance cover for vessels operating in parts of the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters.

The move follows escalating geopolitical tensions in the region, which have significantly increased the risk profile for ships transiting one of the world's most important energy and trade corridors. The decision by insurers is expected to push up shipping costs, alter trade routes and force shipowners to reconsider voyages through the affected waters.

P&I clubs are mutual marine insurers that collectively cover the vast majority of the world's commercial shipping fleet, providing protection for liabilities such as environmental damage, collisions, cargo losses and other maritime claims. War-risk coverage is typically offered as an additional layer of protection for vessels operating in high-risk zones.

Several leading clubs – including Gard, Skuld, NorthStandard and the American Club – have issued formal

notices cancelling certain war-risk policies for ships operating in Iranian waters and the wider Gulf region. The cancellations are generally effective after a 72-hour notice period and reflect a rapid reassessment of risk in the region.

The affected areas include Iranian territorial waters and large parts of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and adjacent maritime zones. While standard mutual P&I cover remains in place for most shipowners, the withdrawal of baseline war-risk protection could deter many vessels from entering the region. Without that cover, owners are unlikely to risk operating in what insurers increasingly regard as an active conflict zone.

Industry analysts warn that the change could lead to a sharp increase in insurance premiums for ships that continue to operate in the Gulf. Estimates suggest marine hull insurance costs could rise by between 25% and 50% in the near term, depending on the level of escalation and whether merchant vessels come under direct attack.

Some insurers have indicated that coverage may still be available through short-term

“buy-back” arrangements. These policies allow shipowners to obtain war-risk protection for specific voyages but at significantly higher premiums and under stricter conditions.

The developments come at a time when the Gulf remains a critical artery for global energy shipments and containerised trade. Any disruption to shipping through the region could have wide-ranging consequences for global supply chains, freight rates and energy markets.

For shipowners and charterers, the withdrawal of war-risk cover introduces a difficult calculation. Sailing without insurance exposes companies to enormous financial risks, yet avoiding the region could mean costly detours and delays.

As tensions persist, insurers and shipping companies are expected to closely monitor developments while reassessing risk exposure. For the maritime sector, the sudden contraction in war-risk coverage underscores how geopolitical instability can quickly ripple through the global logistics system, reshaping both the cost and the security of international trade.

Africa pushes regenerative Blue Economy agenda at Durban Summit

OCEAN Innovation Africa Summit 2026 will take place in Durban from 23–25 March, bringing together policymakers, investors, scientists and entrepreneurs to accelerate the development of Africa's ocean economy and position the continent at the forefront of the global shift toward a regenerative blue economy.

The summit, hosted at the Durban International Convention Centre, is being organised by OceanHub Africa in partnership with eThekweni Municipality, which is serving as host city and main partner.

The gathering aims to move beyond discussion toward coordinated action across Africa's ocean industries. Participants will include development finance institutions, policymakers, community leaders and private-sector investors working to unlock capital flows, scale innovation and strengthen cooperation across the continent's maritime economy.

According to summit organisers, Africa is well positioned to play a leading role in shaping the next phase of the global blue economy. The continent has more than 38 coastal and island states and vast ma-



rine resources that support fisheries, shipping, tourism and emerging ocean-based industries.

Alexis Grosskopf, founder of OceanHub Africa and spokesperson for the summit, said Africa is approaching a pivotal moment as climate pressures and ocean degradation intensify worldwide.

“With a rapidly expanding ocean economy, Africa has a unique opportunity to lead a regenerative model — one that restores ecosystems, strengthens long-term stability and drives equitable economic growth,” Grosskopf said.

The summit will focus on several priority themes, including regenerative blue business models, nature-positive growth, new financing pathways and the devel-

opment of pan-African innovation ecosystems. Sessions will also explore marine protection strategies that balance economic expansion with community stability and environmental restoration.

Unlike traditional conferences, organisers describe Ocean Innovation Africa as an ongoing action platform designed to convert dialogue into concrete partnerships and projects.

Grosskopf said the 2026 programme has been structured to bring the right actors together to drive implementation. Alongside panel discussions and workshops, the summit will feature curated business-to-business matchmaking sessions, investor meetings and solution-focused working groups.

For eThekweni Municipality, hosting the summit forms part of broader efforts to strengthen Durban's role as a hub for maritime innovation and ocean governance. The city has been working to enhance coastal management, support port-linked innovation and align local development planning with climate resilience and ocean sustainability goals.

Following the public summit, selected participants will attend the invitation-only Ocean Impact Retreat 2026 from 25–27 March. The retreat is intended to deepen collaboration between key stakeholders across finance, science, policy and innovation, and to translate summit discussions into practical implementation steps.

The global ocean economy is estimated to generate trillions of dollars annually, but mounting pressures such as overfishing, habitat loss, pollution and climate change are threatening marine ecosystems and the economic sectors that depend on them.

Organisers argue that incremental sustainability efforts are no longer sufficient and that a regenerative approach — one that restores natural systems while supporting economic development — is required.

By bringing together African and international stakeholders under this framework, the summit aims to strengthen Africa's role in global ocean governance and ensure that the continent helps shape emerging blue economy models.

With growing global attention on ocean-climate solutions and long-term development strategies beyond 2030, the Durban summit is expected to position Africa as both a contributor and a leader in the future of the global blue economy.



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The skills reset: Why HR and ICT leaders must rethink “future-ready” talent

AS artificial intelligence, automation, and data-driven systems reshape business models across industries, HR and ICT leaders are facing a defining question: what does truly future-ready talent look like?

While technical expertise in AI, cybersecurity, data science, and cloud engineering remains in high demand, forward-looking organisations are recognising that technical ability alone will not determine success in the next decade. According to the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025, technological change, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts, and geoeconomic fragmentation will significantly transform labour markets by 2030.

For HR and technology leaders, this means talent strategy must evolve beyond filling specialist roles.

Lebo Masola-Mnjama, Talent Manager at Dariel Software, says the conversation has shifted from hiring technical experts to building digitally resilient teams.

“The real skills gap is no longer just about finding developers or cybersecurity specialists,” she explains. “It’s about cultivating professionals who can apply technology responsibly, think critically in complex environments, and translate innovation into real business outcomes.”

Technical depth still matters, but so does breadth

Demand for software engineers, AI and machine learning specialists, data engineers, and cloud security experts is expected to remain strong. As organisations increase reliance on digital infra-

structure, resilience and trust depend on strong technical foundations.

However, Masola-Mnjama warns against siloed specialisation.

“The professionals who will thrive are those who combine deep technical knowledge with contextual awareness. Understanding risk, compliance, customer impact, and business strategy is what turns technical skill into business value.”

The rise of core human capabilities

Alongside digital expertise, HR leaders are placing increasing emphasis on human-centric competencies:

- **Critical thinking:** Analysing complexity and making sound decisions amid uncertainty.
- **Problem-solving:** Designing practical, sustainable solutions.
- **Adaptability:** Learning continuously as technology and regulation evolve.
- **Curiosity:** Driving innovation through experimentation and lifelong learning.

“These are not soft skills,” Masola-Mnjama stresses. “They are operational capabilities. In digital environments where change is constant, adaptability and judgement become competitive advantages.”

What this means for HR and ICT strategy

For HR departments, talent development must extend beyond technical certification programmes. Structured mentorship, cross-functional collaboration,



Lebo Masola-Mnjama, Talent Manager at Dariel Software

and exposure to real-world problem solving are becoming essential components of workforce design.

For ICT leaders, building high-performing teams requires creating environments where engineers are encouraged to think beyond code - engaging with compliance, customer experience, risk, and ethical AI considerations.

“The safest career strategy today isn’t competing with technology,” says Masola-Mnjama. “It’s learning how to collaborate with it. The professionals who combine technical competence with judgement and adaptability will remain indispensable.”

As South Africa navigates a rapidly digitising economy, organisations that succeed will be those that invest equally in systems and in people — building not only smarter technology, but smarter, more resilient talent ecosystems.

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Meet six young women who are turning science into sustainability solutions

SOUTH Africa’s pulp and paper sector has been opening doors for a growing cohort of young women who apply science and engineering to making the circular bioeconomy a reality.

Over the past 15 years, the Master’s in Engineering bursary and research programme, established by the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA), has seen several young women pursue postgraduate studies in chemical engineering, wood science and related disciplines.

“As a sector centred on the renewability of wood-derived products such as cellulose, paper, packaging and tissue, our students’ research projects enable our members to improve efficiencies and close the loop in the manufacturing process,” says Jane Molony, Executive Director of PAMSA.

The range of research projects is vast – from putting process by-products and waste streams such as lignin, sludge and even food waste to higher value use – to optimising water and energy efficiency.

“One of our earlier students is Sonja Boshoff, who graduated from the programme in 2015. She is a thriving process engineer in an all-female team at Mpack,” says Molony.

Boshoff was instrumental in kick-starting the early research that ultimately led to a bioethanol production project using sludge from the pulp and paper industry. “Paper sludge is rich in organic material such as cellulose, making it a promising feedstock for bioethanol production,” Boshoff explains. Bioethanol serves as a platform chemical in the production of industrial chemicals, bio-based plastics and even sustainable aviation fuel.

“The launch of a bioethanol demonstra-

tion plant in 2024 marked the culmination of more than a decade of research by Stellenbosch University’s Department of Chemical Engineering and its Bioresource Engineering research group, which Boshoff was part of,” notes Molony.

Leane de Beer, who completed her MSc in Chemical Engineering at North-West University in 2020, explored a more cost-effective purification method for lignosulphonate, a lignin-derived by-product of the pulping process. Her work focused on converting what is typically a low-value material into higher-value applications, supporting the circular bioeconomy and reducing reliance on fossil-based inputs. Further work on lignin is ongoing at the Sappi Technology centre and Naude is now progressing in her career as a chemical engineer, working on environmental projects, life cycle assessments, simulation modelling and water management plans.

A junior process engineer at Mpack, Mahlogonolo Mafela looked how to optimise energy usage in the paper manufacturing process by researching different levels of vacuum pressure and time to get the optimal dryness of pulp during the formation of paper. She explains that when the mixture is exposed to the vacuum, water can be removed; much like squeezing a sponge filled with water. “We are basically using a vacuum to squeeze as much water as possible, so I wanted to reduce the energy consumption required by the vacuum pressure process but still optimise water removal,” says Mafela.

Kelly Campbell, who holds a BEng in Chemical Engineering and is completing her MEng at Stellenbosch University, is focusing on food waste fermentation for ethanol production. Instead of going

to landfill, this waste could be converted into ethanol through fermentation,” Campbell explains. “That diversion reduces landfill emissions and creates a high-value product with potential in the chemical and transport sectors.” Campbell is currently working at Mpack as an engineer-in-training.

Lerato Tau will be graduating with her master’s at the University of Pretoria this year. “For my project I used thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) to measure how certain materials used in the papermaking process behave when heated.” Her project sought to study the make-up and thermal stability of feedstocks, process materials and final paper products.

Traditional laboratory tests to analyse paper materials can take three days and require dangerous chemicals. Tau’s heat-based approach delivers the same information in about six hours, making it safer, faster and more practical for the industry.

Another example of the circular bioeconomy in action is the work of Gabriela Carzola, now a process engineer in training at an engineering firm. Her master’s project through Stellenbosch University, explored methods to convert papermaking reject material into a slow-release fertiliser for trees in commercial forestry plantations.

“The work of these incredible women demonstrates how our sector is driven by sustainability and innovation,” Molony concludes. “By investing in women and girls in STEM fields, we are strengthening the forest-products value chain, supporting a circular bioeconomy with low-carbon alternatives and ensuring that we build a pipeline of young women for our sector’s future.”

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The hidden cost of hesitation in onboarding

By Chantelle Botha



IN my previous life as a recruiter, I built a spreadsheet to calculate the total cost of onboarding a new hire. While every role differs slightly, the numbers showed that at least 30–50% of that person's annual salary is spent on recruitment, training, and onboarding.

This is before the real costs begin. According to Gallup, only 12% of employees agree their company does a great job onboarding. Nearly nine out of ten people start a new role under-supported. This is where a less visible, but far more expensive cost creeps in: hesitation.

We don't lose people or productivity because they can't do the job. We lose them because we never helped them belong in it.

When onboarding falls short, hesitation shows up in decision-making and willingness to take ownership. During those first

critical 100 days, that hesitation erodes self-belief.

Think back to when you first entered the workplace, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Then day one arrives and you suddenly feel like a rabbit in the headlights. The confidence you felt retreated and you started second-guessing yourself.

I've experienced this feeling every time I started a new role. I call it confidence shrinkage.

Confidence shrinkage is not a lack of competence. It's a natural response to uncertainty, unspoken expectations, and the pressure to prove yourself. When left unaddressed, it manifests as hesitation.

Here's what hesitation looks like in the first 100 days:

- A new hire sitting in a meeting with an idea but choosing not to voice it.
- An employee labouring over an email worried it sounds "stupid."
- A junior manager deferring decisions upward because they don't yet trust their judgement.
- A talented recruit waiting for permission instead of taking initiative.

Each of these moments feels small. But multiplied across weeks, teams, and salaries, they compound into lost velocity, delayed decisions, and managerial dependency.

The hidden cost of hesitation determines whether you hired a future contributor or

a long-term passenger. We ask new hires to "hit the ground running," but are we putting our money where our mouth is by building the runway?

Recruitment is a significant financial investment. Without intentional leadership, that investment is undermined when confidence shrinkage goes unnoticed. This pattern will deepen unless it's arrested.

This places a clear responsibility on line managers. Not just to onboard the role, but to onboard the human. Confidence doesn't automatically follow capability; it must be deliberately cultivated.

When I deliver confidence-focused onboarding for graduate intakes, the impact is unmistakable in reducing early attrition. The talent teams I partner with don't view onboarding as administration; they see it as a strategic lever for engagement, performance, and risk reduction.

So let me leave you with three diagnostic questions:

1. How long does it really take a new hire to challenge a decision?
2. How often do managers complain about "hand-holding" in the first six months?
3. How many capable employees wait for permission instead of taking ownership?

If any of these feel familiar, you're already paying the cost, whether you've named it or not.

The question is not whether confidence

shrinkage exists in your organisation, but how long you're willing to let it compound. Now is the time to conduct an onboarding audit that minimises hesitation and maximises belonging, ownership, and impact from day one.



Chantelle Botha, known globally as *The Catalyst*, is an Identity Architect who partners with leadership and talent teams to identify and eliminate confidence shrinkage in onboarding. Using her proprietary Phoenix Blueprint, she helps companies build a culture of curiosity and courage that translates into confident decision-making and measurable results.

Executives interested in conducting an onboarding audit to uncover the hidden cost of hesitation can contact Chantelle:

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THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER THE EXECUTIVE GUIDE TO STRATEGIC TRAVEL

Business travel: A key driver of employee retention



Herman Heunes, General Manager, Corporate Traveller.

RETAINING top talent is critical for any business, but for SMEs the impact of losing a key employee is especially severe. It can disrupt operations, affect customer relationships and damage morale, while replacement costs can reach up to twice an employee's annual salary.

While smaller businesses may struggle to match corporate salaries, Corporate Traveller South Africa argues they can compete in other ways including flexibility, career

growth, culture, recognition and, increasingly, the quality of business travel.

Research from employee benefits platform PerkSpot shows that 63% of employees are more likely to stay with an employer that offers business travel, rising to 76% among Gen Z. Companies that increased travel budgets in 2023 also saw lower employee turnover than those that cut spending.

"For SMEs facing the same travel complexities as large corporates but with fewer resources, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity," says Herman Heunes, General Manager of Corporate Traveller. "Travel spend needs to work harder – not just as a cost, but as a retention tool."

From wellness to wellbeing

Traveller wellness traditionally focused on physical and mental health; healthy meals, rest and fitness. Today, the focus has broadened to wellbeing, which includes emotional health, safety, work-life balance and overall experience.

Frequent travel, long hours and time away from home can quickly erode morale. As a result, companies are prioritising predictability, fairness and support to reduce travel stress.

What a better travel experience looks like

For SMEs, improving the travel experience

does not require luxury spending. It's about reducing friction and showing employees their time and wellbeing are valued.

Before travel, this includes clear policies, realistic schedules and adequate rest between trips.

During travel, it means practical upgrades such as premium economy seating on long-haul flights and accommodation close to meeting locations to reduce fatigue and save time.

After the trip, fast reimbursements and minimal out-of-pocket costs help reduce financial stress. Across the entire journey, strong duty of care, including 24/7 support and comprehensive travel insurance, is essential. Many employees still don't know who to contact in an emergency, highlighting the need for better communication and support.

"Businesses are moving beyond the cheapest option," says Heunes. "They're balancing cost with comfort, safety and productivity, recognising that how people travel directly affects retention."

Small changes, big impact

Importantly, high-impact improvements don't require large budgets:

- Flexible policies: Options such as leisure travel, flexible working hours or recovery days can significantly improve the experience at little cost.

- Smart comfort investments: Premium economy seating and conveniently located accommodation improve productivity and reduce stress.
- Streamlined admin: Faster reimbursements and simple expense systems reduce frustration and show respect for employees' time.
- Strong support systems: Clear emergency contacts, comprehensive insurance and access to 24/7 travel assistance build trust.
- Purposeful travel: Trips should support development, with clear objectives and time for meaningful engagement rather than rushed schedules.

Research shows employees increasingly view business travel as an opportunity for growth and connection, not just a logistical requirement.

The bottom line

As talent competition intensifies, business travel is becoming a strategic lever for retention. For SMEs, it's an opportunity to demonstrate that employees are valued, supported and trusted.

A thoughtful, well-managed travel experience doesn't just improve trips, it strengthens loyalty, boosts productivity and helps businesses hold onto their most important asset: their people.



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