

Eskom, the Netherlands to collaborate on Grootvlei Power Station transition

Eskom has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Netherlands to collaborate on job creation, economic growth initiatives and improvement of the environment around the Grootvlei Power Station in Mpumalanga. In July last year, the two parties signed a similar LoI.



Source: Reuters/Mike Hutchings

The power utility explained that the new LoI provides an “integrated and sustainable approach” for the power station’s repurpose from a coal-fired station to a renewable energy hub which will also create other training and job opportunities for the surrounding community.

“This marks a milestone in South Africa’s transition away from coal reliance and a key moment in Eskom’s partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The LoI aligns on the need to develop and implement a smart agriculture demonstration facility, to collaborate further on agricultural activities and to train community members at the Grootvlei Power Station.

“Through this LoI, Eskom and the Netherlands seek to develop further opportunities to create jobs by training and upskilling people from the local communities. The LoI also puts forward the intention to explore the potential of creating a market in the region for profitable, productive, sustainable, and climate-smart farming,” Eskom said.

The power utility said it envisions the development of a climate-smart horticulture demonstration site which is also expected to create job opportunities.

“In addition, relevant knowledge and skills between South Africa and the Netherlands will be transferred and local enterprises’ business cases will be improved while promoting the creation of new enterprises.

“Finally, synergies will be explored and identified with the broader Just Energy Transition (JET) training facility at GrootMei,” the power utility said.



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Repurposing existing coal plants

Eskom said it plans to continue to undertake socioeconomic studies to understand the impact of the closure of its coal plants and how to mitigate the impact.

“Eskom seeks to repower and repurpose other existing coal plants in line with the approach detailed in the LoI. This is aimed at preserving jobs and utilising existing grid capacity across South Africa. These projects will prioritise Mpumalanga’s oldest coal plants.”

It said the coal plants will be repowered by leveraging the existing infrastructure to build new generation capacity including solar, wind, batteries and/or synchronous condensers.

“The plants may also be repurposed into new centres of economic activity such as training centres, water treatment facilities, manufacturing plants, microgrid assemblies and modern farms,” Eskom said.

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