



BLOWN AWAY: Molteno livestock farmers Pam and Leroy Phillips have leased grazing land for the erection of wind turbines as part of the 40-turbine Dorper Wind Farm, a R2.2-billion project that was launched this week
Picture: BARBARA HOLLANDS

Wind farming new in Karoo

Eskom to buy power generated by Molteno turbines

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PREVIOUSLY known predominantly as the birthplace of the iconic Ouma rusk, the small Eastern Cape town of Molteno is now set to become synonymous with wind energy generation.

This was the sentiment of the national Department of Energy's Dr Wolsey Barnard, who was one of the VIP guests at the sod-turning ceremony of the R2.2-billion Dorper Wind Farm between Molteno and Sterkstroom on Tuesday.

The wind farm, which will generate 100 megawatts of electricity harnessed by 40 massive wind turbines which are to be built on five windy sheep and cattle farms, is set for completion in July 2014 and will be one of the Eastern Cape's biggest producers of renewable energy.

The project is a partnership between Rainmaker Energy and Japan's Sumitomo Corporation, while the turbines will be manufactured by Germany's Nordex company and shipped to Coega where they will be loaded onto massive "abnormal load" trailers and transported to Molteno, which is about 550km from Port Elizabeth.

The Dorper Wind Farm, which is named after a type of sheep farmed in the area, entered into a 20-year power purchase agreement with Eskom and an implementation agreement

with the Department of Energy after gaining preferred bidder status in the first round of the department's renewable energy independent power producers procurement programme in December 2011.

The electricity generated by the wind farm will be sold to Eskom.

Rainmaker Energy director Gavin James said the local community would benefit from the wind farm in the form of the Molteno and Sterkstroom Community Development Trust, which holds a 10.2% stake in the project.

Inkwanca Municipality mayor

‘ We are not fond of the wind, but it is great a good use has been found for it

Mthandazo Qamngwana said the project would have "a huge economic impact" on the area, which had a 60% unemployment rate.

He said besides creating job opportunities for locals during the construction phase, the local community, as stakeholders of the project, would sink proceeds into education, infrastructure and health structures.

Nordex sales director Norbert Dwenger said the German turbine supplier considered Dorper Wind Farm as "a visible sign towards a new green future for South Africa".

"Wind and sun are sources of en-

ergy of which there is no shortage."

Dr Barnard said although the initial stages of the project had been met with "a lot of scepticism", Molteno was on its way to being known as a wind energy generation centre which would play its part in diminishing the country's current reliance on fossil fuels.

He said 94% of South Africa's energy was generated by coal "which has a lot of disadvantages".

The five farmers who leased their land for the erection of the turbines had bought into the project "wholeheartedly", James said.

Land owner Leroy Phillips, who has agreed to the erection of 19 wind turbines on his livestock farm, described the energy-creating project as "fantastic". "Initially the process will be quite disruptive, but then it will be farming as usual."

Asked whether noise emanating from the turbines would bother him, Phillips said he would learn to "live with the groan".

"This area is known to be one of the coldest and windiest areas of the Eastern Cape. Although we have grown used to it, we are not fond of the wind, but it is great that a good use has been found for it."