

# Construction at Avon Peaking power plant resumes

PRETORIA: KwaDukuza Municipality and Group Five have reached a power deal that will see construction activities resume at Avon Peaking power plant outside Shakaskraal, in KwaZulu-Natal's north coast.



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This follows the dismissal of about 1,500 construction workers after going on an unprotected strike, which halted construction activities for the past six weeks.

KwaDukuza Mayor Ricardo Mthembu and Group Five Executive Director Willie Zeelie jointly announced the official remobilisation and recommencement of construction activities.

Mayor Mthembu and Zeelie said an accord was reached following a rigorous but constructive consultation process, which resulted in around 70% of workers, who were dismissed, being employed to complete the contract.

Mayor Mthembu said that the council is happy that the project is back on track. He said the municipality was not protecting the power plant but was creating an investment-friendly environment for the sake of job creation.

"It is also our duty to protect private companies, who provide these opportunities. This is an important project for this country and the international community due to the demand for power.

"This deal was concluded with a great deal of level-headedness and maturity from all parties, putting the project first. We have secured about 500 jobs as a result of this project and this resolution is an important milestone for us," said Mayor Mthembu.

He said they have successfully championed the interests of workers, as well as those of Group Five by facilitating constructive discussions towards a win-win resolution.

"We will ensure that we honour our commitment to ensuring that there is stability on this project going forward. No one must destroy this marriage."

Zeelie confirmed that with the assistance of ward councillors, the reemployment process is running smoothly and that people on site are working and are happy to be back.

"Our discussions were focused on finding solutions. We had constructive roundtable debates with the leadership of KwaDukuza Municipality and were able to find an amicable solution. We thank the KwaDukuza councillors and the mayor for his leadership," Zeelie said.

As this project resumes, Zeelie added, the site team will be working under enormous pressure due to the delays, with on-time delivery of the project being a huge challenge.

The Avon Peaking power plant is a private initiative developed by Italian company GDF Suez Consortium, which is implementing the project on behalf of the national Department of Energy.

Once in operation, the plant will feed electricity to the national grid.

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