

The case against renewables for economic growth

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Relying on renewable energy sources if South Africa wants to achieve sustainable economic development is a bad idea, according independent economic consultant, Rob Jeffrey.



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“No doubt, we have to clean fossil fuels, but we can’t rely on renewables to build the economy,” he said.

He said he has nothing against renewables, such as solar, to power offices and building, but he feels that it is irresponsible to rely on unreliable sources for large-scale energy production.

Environmental issue

In the background of every decision regarding energy is the environmental issue and lens of COP 21, which encapsulated good goals in terms of carbon emissions, with no obligations. This, Jeffrey said is important for developing countries. Many provisions establish common goals while allowing flexibility to accommodate different national capacities and circumstances. The reason for an objective or goal without binding obligations was simply that various countries could not get national political agreement internally (USA) or emerging countries were not going to make any such firm commitments as they either had high levels of poverty and/or had rich fossil fuel reserves.

He also pointed out that renewable projects, both in the form of wind and solar farms, take up large tracts of land and very rarely provide large-scale job creation for local communities after construction is completed.

Another negative consequence of wind farms is the effect it has on bird species. “We are going to decimate four birds per megawatt per year.

“The fact of the matter is you will never get the sun to shine at night. Renewables need 100% back up,” he said.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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