

Vukile to invest R350m in solar PV backup power across its malls

Vukile Property Fund plans to invest around R350m in backup power across its malls to support continuous trade for its tenants and lower its costs and CO2 emissions. Implementing this strategy, it also aims to manage the long-term impact of rising electricity costs - its biggest operational cost line item - beyond the current crisis.



Atlantis City Shopping Centre. Source: Supplied

Commented Laurence Rapp, CEO of Vukile: “This initiative is not only financially accretive but also drives sustainable malls and ensures that our numerous communities continue to be comprehensively serviced, even in the current challenging context.”

The investment will see 17 of its shopping malls countrywide install solar photovoltaic-powered battery systems.

“Some 70% of our malls trade during load shedding. We would like to increase this number to 100% by giving our retailers the option to tap into a cheaper, more sustainable and clean form of backup power than the currently widely used diesel-powered generators,” said Itumeleng Mothibeli, MD SA at Vukile.



Growthpoint powers SA business through load shedding

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Generators come with high fuel costs

Vukile’s research shows that while diesel-driven generators have been a suitable solution for lower levels of load shedding

in the past – and continue to be so in certain cases – in continuous Stage 3 or higher load shedding, the financial cost of current backup solutions makes them no longer feasible in most cases.



Itumeleng Mothibeli, MD South Africa, Vukile Property Fund

They carry unsustainably high fuel costs, substantial maintenance costs and contribute to carbon and noise pollution. On average, total electricity costs for tenants increased by between 25% to 30% based on having to run generators at R8-10/kWh during load shedding over the period January to October 2022.

Vukile's new hybrid solar-battery, grid-tied system will give shopping centres at least three sources of power – solar PV, battery backup and the national grid. It says that these silent systems are easy to integrate into malls' existing power networks, need little maintenance and are simple to expand.

Retailers have the option to augment this further with generators for days when solar generation is constrained.

The first phase of the project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2023.

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