

Sustainable businesses honoured

The inaugural Nedbank Capital Sustainable Business Awards saw leading South African companies recognised for their long-term efforts towards sustainability. The ceremony took place at the banking giant's corporate head office in Sandton.



Phase two of the head office became South Africa's first green star-rated building in 2010, and Nedbank itself is recognised as a trailblazer in sustainable business operations.

The awards are an extension of Nedbank Capital's Green Mining Awards, which were launched in 2006 to acknowledge the contribution towards economic development that is made by companies practising responsible mining and mining beneficiation. Since 2007, companies from across the whole of Africa were eligible to enter.

Previous winners include Anglo Coal, Kumba Iron Ore, Lonmin, Xstrata Alloys, and Ghana's Golden Star Resources. The sixth and final edition took place in 2011.

"Although mining is a vital creator of jobs and growth, we wanted to broaden the mining awards to include more general sustainability in other sectors of the economy," said Nedbank CEO Mike Brown. "We were looking for companies which have made sustainability a philosophy, who have not just applied it to a single project."

The winners were not chosen lightly, he said, but were selected by an experienced panel on the basis of their having successfully incorporated sustainability into their long-term business strategy. In today's world, this is a crucial component of business longevity and social and economic relevance.

"Sustainable businesses enjoy success today without stealing from future generations," Brown said. "Their leaders must inspire us all to ensure we leave a better society for our children than the one we inherited from our parents."

The independent judging panel included Elspeth Donovan, South African development director for the University of Cambridge's Programme for Sustainability Leadership; Dr Mandla Adonisi, senior lecturer at the Gordon Institute of Business Science; Joanne Yawitch, CEO of the National Business Initiative; and Jonathon Hanks, the funding director of consulting company Incite Sustainability.

"It's not just about being green, or caring for the environment, or managing your carbon footprint," said Hanks. "Sustainability is so much more than that. It's about understanding how businesses create value."

Sustainability across the board

As with the mining awards, the sustainability awards are open to all African organisations that meet the qualifying criteria - a minimum annual turnover of R200-million (US\$19.6-million), and at least 500 employees.

The categories in the new award format are:

- **Resources and non-renewable energy** - including mining, oil, gas, agriculture and non-renewable energy;
- **Infrastructure and renewable energy** - including logistics, transportation, property development, construction, infrastructure component of telecommunications and renewable energy;
- **Diversified industrials** - including manufacturing and beneficiation;
- **Trade and services** - including tourism, healthcare, retail, warehousing, information technology and media.
- **A fifth category: sustainability in leadership** - is an individual award open to those in an executive management position.

The winners were, in the resources category, Mondi South Africa for its various projects involving energy self-sufficiency, renewable energy and eco-friendly products, as well as its successful wetlands programme, which is viewed as a leader in conservation of these vulnerable ecosystems.

The runners-up were Kumba Iron Ore for its Batho Pele mobile health units, a fleet of nine which is able to service communities as far away from its Sishen mine as 180km; and Xstrata Coal South Africa for its commitment to sustainable land management practices.

In the infrastructure and renewable energy category, the winner was Growthpoint Properties Limited for its innovative Lincoln on the Lake office block, which features KwaZulu-Natal's largest rooftop solar photovoltaic array.

In the trade and services category, the winner was Woolworths, with its Farming for the Future project, a campaign that teaches the retail company's local suppliers to depend more on natural resources and less on chemical fertiliser, and to use water efficiently.

The individual leadership award was presented to Marius Swanepoel, CEO of Imperial Logistics, a logistics and supply chain management company, and Southern Africa's largest employer of industrial engineers. Swanepoel was recognised for his dedication to reducing emissions within the 60 companies that comprise the group, through route optimisation, greater fuel efficiency, and energy, water and waste management, among other initiatives.

There was no winner in the Diversified industrials category.

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