

Freely licensed Access Energy smart meter software piloted in George

George Municipality is the first electricity provider in South Africa to pilot Access Energy, a freely licensed software that automates the reading, processing, and billing of electricity smart meter data. The software allows the municipality to create and load their electricity tariffs and then apply them to a bill.



L-R Gerjo Hoffman, CEO and co-founder of Open Access Energy; Bongani Mandla, director of electrotechnical services, George Municipality; Nicholas Rixon, COO of Open Access Energy; and Louise Botha, George Municipality electrotechnical services

“The need for this freely licensed software pilot became evident when we considered the scaling of wheeling and renewable energy on the George Municipality’s electricity grid,” said Bongani Mandla, director of electrotechnical services at George Municipality.

“The manual billing process was one the main challenges, and resolving this meant reducing reliance and pressure on key human resources, reducing potential errors that could occur in the billing process. Engagement with Open Access Energy on showcasing their software that they license for free has assisted in addressing the challenge for us and we are now piloting the automation of our metering and billing services,” said Mandla.

Wheeling is the delivery of electricity generated by a private operator in one location to a buyer or off-taker in another location via a third-party network (utility or municipality).



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Automated trade

Mandla highlighted that the current George Municipality wheeling pilot consists of trade between one generator and four off-takers through Enpower Trading (a Nersa-licensed energy trader), and this entire process has now been automated using Open Access Energy’s software. The municipality is working on further improvements to its wheeling projects and to

incentivise the private sector (both generators and off-takers) to participate in the programme.

These include creating a platform for customers to view their accounts and access their consumption and billing data in real-time, forming various committees to expedite the process of standardising the use-of-system contracts, as well as moving from the 30-minute reconciliation to a time-of-use reconciliation.



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Boosting renewable energy use

According to Gerjo Hoffman, CEO and co-founder of Open Access Energy — developers of Access Energy — the software company aims to boost the use of renewable energy by simplifying wheeling.

“When we started looking at how we can enable the wheeling market, we realised that many municipalities and metros don’t have access to sufficient software to allow these transactions. Municipalities have to go through tedious tender and procurement processes, so we decided to license our software for free to local municipalities and state-owned entities,” said Hoffman.

The company plans to approach more municipalities in the future.

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