

## **Bulbs hold key to Zesa's fortunes**

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### **Energy-savers could take a massive load off national grid**



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The country can save more than double the amount of electricity it exports to pay off the US\$50 million debt it owes Namibia for refurbishing its power generation plants at Hwange if consumers turned to energy-saving bulbs, the spokesman for Zesa Holdings, Fullard Gwasira has said. More than 380 megawatts (MW) would be saved monthly, minimising load shedding through the use of energy-savers (tubular bulbs) that consume 80 percent less electricity as compared to what traditional bulbs and fluorescent tubes consume. The saving can adequately light up four towns of Zimbabwe. The power utility and NamPower of Namibia entered into an agreement for the refurbishment of Hwange Power Station (HPS) on a government-to-government agreement in 2007, with NamPower undertaking to finance the phased rehabilitation exercise of the power station.

The agreement provided that Zesa would repay the debt through power exports of 150MW to Namibia until the loan is cleared. Gwasira could not, however, put a monetary cost to the amount of electricity exported. An electricity industry expert recently painted a gloomy picture of the deal, saying more could have been done to lessen the huge costs suffered by Zesa. The expert suggested the deal was flawed, explaining that by the time the refurbishment is completed, Zimbabwe would need to borrow again for further upkeep of the power generation units. He suggested the amount of money could be used to import energy savers and still meet the required 150MW provided under the deal.

Gwasira dismissed the explanation, saying the expert misled the public because the refurbishment exercise ensured that the electricity-generating asset (UNIT 3) of HPS now reliably operates with minimal breakdowns. It has now become the backbone of the Hwange Power Station. The refurbished station will have the capability to ensure security of electricity supply through reduced forced outages as the refurbished will be now operating at optimal. Two more units are expected to come onto the grid this month, thereby ensuring security of supply to up to 360MW on the phase 1 rehabilitation, said Gwasira. The refurbishment of Hwange Power Station is a reliable and effective measure. The station will not require another refurbishment in five years as alleged, he said.

Complete refurbishment of stage 1 and 2 will mean that the station will provide a reliable electricity supply of 920MW, up from the current average of about 400MW. Full utilisation of the plant will also depend on availability of reliable coal supplies to feed the units. Gwasira said Zesa, through its subsidiary Zesa Enterprises, is currently retailing energy saver bulbs through its hardware stores. More could be done if foreign currency was readily available to rollout the use of these bulbs on a greater scale, he said.