

## **GIBA GOES GREEN (AGAIN!)**

Since opening in 2011, Giba Storage has grown aggressively to keep pace with the demand for Self-Storage in Westmead, South Africa. Located inside Giba Business Park, the facility has expanded from 56 units to 220, and still has ample space for more development. In addition to more storage units, the operator is meeting yet another demand—providing clean energy.

Last year, Giba added solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to the rooftops of several storage buildings. The 150 kilowatt peak system feeds into the property's electricity grid and supplies power to tenants of the business park, an eco-friendly environment for light industrial and commercial tenants. The goal is to add solar panels to every storage building's roof as electricity demand in the business park increases.

"We currently have just over 30 tenants in Giba Business Park, all of whom are using electricity in various quantities," says CEO Chris Harburn. "They all make use of our own prepaid meters, so we actually have a captive market to sell our 'green' electricity."

### **Getting Funded**

Unfortunately, lenders didn't immediately see the potential and various benefits of the solar project. The company began raising funds to install the panels just a year after opening, but struggled to find financial backers. "After fighting for three years, we eventually found someone who would fund the first-phase installation—at a huge expense," Harburn says. "For us, it was more important that we got started. Once we had a system up and running, we felt we could then go to the banks with a working model."

The system was installed in September 2016, with the first "green electricity" fed to the park's grid on Oct. 22. The system consists of 567 panels on the roofs with six inverters stored inside a unit. To date, we have produced 158.72 megawatt hours which has resulted in the following environmental benefits:

1. 207.28 equivalent trees planted
2. CO2 Emission saved = 62,023.48 Kg
3. Light bulbs powered = 479.464.1 for a day

"We've borrowed just over R2.5 million at expensive rates, but once we've run the system for at least a year, we feel we could raise additional finance at a much better rate and extend the system to cover the rest of the roof space," Harburn says. "Our long-term plan is to then cover the roof space on some of our existing factory buildings. All future factories we develop will be designed with the solar PV in mind."

### **More Green Initiatives**

Giba Business Park is in an area famous for its diverse nature and outdoor activities. The Giba Valley is known locally as Clifton Canyon, and since 2007, it has become popular with the public thanks to the opening of the Giba Gorge Mountain Bike Park. Outdoor recreation and activities in the valley include boot camps, horse trails, venture groups, mountain-bike rides, organic produce, restaurants and conferences.

The park's location has largely led to its design as a sustainable environment through low impact eco-practices. It's built on a large plot of land that's also home to the Stockville Quarry, a decomposed granite quarry. Waste material from the quarry has been used in the construction of the storage facility. In addition, the quarry is also being rehabilitated.

“Our whole environmental management plan for the quarry was to rehabilitate the quarried areas into level platforms for future industrial use,” Harburn says. “We’re about 70 percent through this process and have about three to four years left of life in the quarry depending on demand.”

While there’s still work to be done, the overall goal is to offer an eco-driven sustainable business park where people from all walks of life can work and play together.