

DFA reaches 5 000km milestone

Local open access dark fibre infrastructure provider, Dark Fibre Africa (DFA), has laid more than 5 000 kilometres of fibre infrastructure over the past four years. Entering the market as rookies, DFA has evolved into the largest open access fibre infrastructure provider in Southern Africa, with an expenditure plan in excess of R3-billion.

The Company's CEO Gustav Smit says DFA now employs more than 200 permanent staff and in excess of 6 000 people through its business partners. "DFA is playing an important role of empowering communities through its business partners; they are required to use local labour from within the communities they are constructing in."

"Besides the labour benefits, we also provide the infrastructure that enables licensed operators like Vodacom, MTN and Cell C to give communities access to the network. Our footprint extends nationally and links with the SEACOM and the EASSy cables at Mthunzini in KwaZulu Natal and links to the WACS cable at Yzerfontein and the SAT 3 cable at Melkbosstrand in the Western Cape," he explains.

Long haul infrastructure accounts for approximately 20 percent of the infrastructure whilst South Africa's highest-density metropolitan areas, accounts for the balance. Gauteng metropolitan already boasts more than 1800 kilometres of open fibre network while Cape Town follows with approximately 800 kilometres and Durban and Pretoria each with more than 600 kilometres. DFA plans to roll-out another 700 kilometres in secondary cities and towns before the end of 2012.

"The infrastructure is available," Smit says it is now up to the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to get fibre based internet connectivity to communities. "ISP's should be proactive in getting fibre rolled out to businesses and homes within South Africa. There is fibre in virtually every street in Sandton, you can fibre up every building there but there has been little momentum from the ISP side."

Smit has once again called on ISPs to start leading projects like these and said that ISPs must play a leading role to mobilise communities. "End users simply don't know what 20Mbps or 100Mbps to the home is, an opportunity needs to be created for users to test drive serious broadband."

"We are thankful to our business partners and to the communities that we work with. DFA is here to provide a long term sustainable solution to communities, a project that will change the face of broadband in Southern Africa."