

Green conference paves way for a cleaner SA

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Litha Communications has just completed yet another signature conference and gala event for the National Department of Environmental Affairs on 15 September at the Birchwood Conference Centre.

Dubbed the 1st Waste Management Officer's Khoro ("Conference" in TshiVhenda), it drew more than 400 delegates from national, provincial and local government. This follows the promulgation of the Waste Act which is aimed at addressing the waste problem by instituting mechanisms of waste avoidance, minimisation, recycling, recovery, appropriate licensing, collection and storage, as well as implementing environmentally-sound treatment mechanism and disposal of problematic waste streams.

One of the six themes of the conference - "Reduce Recycle, Reuse" - focused on what needs to be done to encourage recycling and minimisation of waste. As it happens, our urban households generate about 15 million tons of waste, while industry accounts for an additional 25 million tons annually. This presents an opportunity to drive recycling options to create job opportunities and boost economic development and thus positively positioning waste management as one of the drivers of the green economy.

The other theme of the conference centred on capacity building and awareness.

"The effectiveness of many waste measures, particularly those aimed at waste reduction, recycling and litter prevention, depend, to a significant extent, on changing public behaviour and attitudes towards litter in order to prevent waste from reaching the landfills in the first place," says Andile Ncontsa, CEO of Litha Communications.

Historically, municipalities have seen their role as waste collector coupled with the disposal of waste at landfill sites.

"Landfills are unsustainable and expensive to build," he says.

One of the outcomes of the conference was an agreement on setting recycling targets to help monitor the rate at which we are implementing the waste hierarchy, specifically, how quickly we prevent waste from reaching landfills, 80% of which are not even licensed. Cities like Cape Town have less than five years left of available landfill space.

"Again, Litha was very fortunate to be involved in a conference dealing with an issue that lies close to our hearts. Our own social responsibility policy strongly reflects our commitment to greening and job creation.

"We seek to offset the carbon footprint of our operations and take care to conduct our projects in an environmentally responsible way. We offer our clients an opportunity to do the same by contributing a tree for every delegate that attends our events. For this purpose, our non-governmental partner of choice is the Wildlands Conservation Trust. We also contribute our time, talent and materials to Waste2Wow, a job creation design and manufacturing studio that recycles advertising banners and billboards, turning trash into creative and desirable eco-friendly wow items," he says.

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