

## Ground broken for US\$60-m solar-powered plant in Westmoreland

BY HORACE HINES  
Observer staff reporter  
hinesh@jamaicaobserver.com  
Thursday, December 14, 2017



Minister of Science, Energy and Technology Dr Andrew Wheatley (second left) is joined by (from left) Lionel Bony (left), director general Neoen Mexico; Angella Rainford, one of the directors of Eight Rivers; Jean-Michel Despax, the ambassador of France in Jamaica; and Dr Roman Rocke, a representative of Mitglied-des Vorstandes, during the ground-breaking ceremony for the US\$60-million 37-megawatt solar-powered plant in Paradise Park, Westmoreland, yesterday. (Photo: Philp Lemonte)



1/1



**PARADISE PARK, Westmoreland — Minister of Science, Energy and Technology Andrew Wheatley says the Eight Rivers Energy Company's US\$60-million 37-megawatt solar-powered plant, for which ground was broken yesterday, will push Jamaica's energy diversification efforts.**

Speaking yesterday at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Latin American and Caribbean region's largest solar-powered plant system, Dr Wheatley noted that with Eight Rivers selling energy at 8.53 US cents per kilowatt hour to the Jamaica Public Service, it augurs well for customers.

"Where we are, ladies and gentlemen, we are on the right trajectory to ensure that we not only supply residential customers, but the productive sector as well [with] affordable energy. It is what is going to actually fuel growth. Energy fuels growth and, as a ministry, we have a responsibility to ensure that we provide the energy sector with not only clean energy, but affordable energy," the energy minister said.

"And so, this US 8.53 cents per kilowatt hour is the lowest in the region," Wheatley continued.

The minister went even further to say he anticipates that the price will be less than 8.53 US cents per kilowatt hour later on.

"I am sure once you (Eight Rivers) have completed the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) and we go back to the market with some requests for proposals, we anticipate even lower prices again. Not only because we are setting a trend, but we know that the technology will afford us to be able to supply cheaper electricity to the consumers, and that is what we are all about. We are about providing cheap and affordable energy," he declared.

Meanwhile, Angela Rainford, one of the directors of Eight Rivers Energy Company, outlined that the solar-powered plant, jointly sponsored by a French and a German company, will generate savings in the economy.

She noted that her company received a 20-year licence from the Government to operate.

"It is the cheapest source of renewable energy on the island, so it has really positive benefits for the country," Rainford told the **Jamaica Observer** yesterday.

"Because we are generating power from the sun, we don't have to buy gas, we don't have to buy oil. So, over the life of the plant, we will be saving close to a quarter of a billion US dollars. In foreign currency that makes a big difference for the country. You can imagine US\$250 million that you can reinvest in the country rather than buy oil," she reasoned.

In the meantime, the energy minister asserted that with Jamaica now being the leading renewable country, not only in the Caribbean but in Latin America, "we are building on that legacy".

"In 2016, the World Economic Forum ranked Jamaica as number one in the Caribbean as it relates to energy diversification, and I think we have become accustomed to being the leaders, and so we are not going to contemplate being the leaders any more but to be trendsetters. And so we are setting targets," Wheatley said.