

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

3 August 2012

### **Investec and BirdLife South Africa partner in pursuit of responsible renewable energy development**

Investec Capital Markets and BirdLife South Africa announce the appointment of a Birds and Renewable Energy Manager to actively participate in the renewable energy sector, with effect from 1 August 2012. This unique position is being sponsored by Investec Capital Markets and will have the overarching focus of minimising the impact of renewable energy developments on birds and their habitats.

“Following a thorough selection process, we were delighted to secure a suitably strong candidate for the new role. Samantha Ralston has the requisite experience and a clear passion for conservation biology and environmental management,” said Dr Hanneline Smit of BirdLife South Africa.

Although supportive of greener energy production, BirdLife South Africa is cognisant of the possible negative impacts of wind energy facilities on avifauna and believes it is important that decisions are taken prior to construction to minimise the impact on birds. Investec Capital Markets specialises in the financing and development of environmentally-sustainable infrastructure, particularly clean and renewable energy projects and is committed to ensuring appropriate preventative measures are in place to protect endangered and high risk bird species.

“While positive steps are being taken to achieve a sustainable energy mix for South Africa, little is understood of the broader environmental impact of certain renewable energies. Working with BirdLife South Africa gives us the opportunity to invest in the capacity to produce quality data to inform future decisions,” explained Michael Meeser, head of Resource and Infrastructure Finance at Investec.

The appointment of a dedicated individual to research and monitor the impact of wind farm projects is a first for the country. In this role Samantha Ralston will endeavor to:

- make all developers and avifaunal specialists comply with the non-negotiable aspects of monitoring;
- keep records of the cumulative impacts of developments on bird populations, especially where there are several developments in an area;
- manage all queries regarding the Avian Wind Sensitivity Map, a tool developed by BirdLife South Africa and its partners and update the map as new information becomes available; and
- assist with the annual reviews of the wind monitoring guidelines and solar monitoring guidelines.

The key goals of the partnership between Investec and BirdLife South Africa are to ensure that minimum standards can be applied to local, and potentially international, green energy initiatives, to provide a responsible framework for the development of these projects and align the costs of environmental management.

With a Masters in Conservation Biology and seven years of experience reviewing EIAs, Samantha Ralston brings a sound understanding of conservation biology and systematic conservation planning. "I am very familiar with the challenges that wind farms and solar energy facilities pose to biodiversity conservation, but also the challenges that the renewable industry faces in introducing this important technology to South Africa. I am really looking forward to the opportunity to engage proactively and positively with industry on these issues," she said.

Ralston joined BirdLife South Africa in her role as Birds and Renewable Energy Manager on 1 August 2012. Investec Capital Markets has committed to sponsoring the position within BirdLife South Africa for an initial period of three years.

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Investec Capital Markets**

Investec's Capital Markets division provides a wide range of products, services and solutions to select corporate clients, public sector bodies and financial institutions. The division undertakes the bulk of Investec's proprietary trading activities, as well as all non-private client deposit taking, corporate and public sector lending, project finance, acquisition and leveraged finance as well as advisory and structuring activities.

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<http://www.investec.co.za/products-and-services/financing-and-lending/project-and-infrastructure-finance.html>

### **About Birdlife South Africa**

BirdLife South Africa is the largest bird conservation NPO in South Africa. BirdLife South Africa is a registered non-profit, public benefit environmental organization and the only dedicated bird-conservation organisation in South Africa. It has over 6 000 members in 32 bird clubs throughout South Africa. BirdLife South Africa has three distinguished South Africans, Mrs Gaynor Rupert, Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe and Mr Mark Shuttleworth, as its Honorary Patrons.

BirdLife South Africa and the Endangered Wildlife Trust have developed two tools to guide the renewable energy industry in the decision making process. These tools are the Avian Best Practice Monitoring Guidelines <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/birds-and-wind-energy> and Avian Wind Farm Sensitivity Map <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/birds-and-wind-energy/windmap>.

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