Flow batteries rwanda

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The announcement made today comes shortly after CellCube CEO Alexander Schoenfeldt told Energy-Storage.news in an interview last week that the vanadium flow battery supply chain needs to scale up dramatically to reach the ‘gigafactory’ levels of production he wants to see.

Cellcube, officially called Enerox but better known by its brand name, has signed the five-year framework agreement with renewable energy developer Kibo Energy to deploy at least 1GW of storage in targeted Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. The SADC comprises all 16 countries from South Africa up to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania.

The two companies have agreed to develop and deploy long-duration energy storage (LDES) solutions in the region using Cellcube’s technology. Kibo, which has historically owned coal projects but is transitioning to green energy, will be project developer and an integrator of the CellCube solutions, subject to audit and certification by CellCube.

The Ireland-based, stock-listed developer has been granted conditional exclusive rights to the marketing, sales, configuration and delivery of CellCube’s VRFBs when deploying solutions for behind-the-meter microgrid applications, subject to successful proof of concept projects which will be ordered by June 30. The exclusivity does not extend to utility-scale projects.

In an interview at last week’s Intersolar Europe / Electrical Energy Storage Europe trade event in Germany, prior to this announcement, Cellcube CEO Schoenfeldt explained to Energy-Storage.news the reasoning behind this strategic focus on microgrids.

“Our main target markets are high solar radiation and specifically on-site generation where industrial customers can use our batteries to avoid high grid costs. Particularly in places like North America, the Sub-Saharan region and Australia. Our focus in Europe is on security of supply for industrial clients and owners & operators of critical infrastructure,” he said.

“For today"s sales we are looking at the microgrid business rather than large-scale front-of-meter because the supply chain hasn"t ramped up yet for vanadium batteries. But as market leader we are at the same time developing large scale deployments in order to build the demand for more production capacity to be built.”

Kibo, which has a dual listing on London’s AIM market and the AltX on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, plans to develop an order pipeline from its already existing project pipeline of up to 21,200 installations, ranging from 40kWh-2,000kWh per installation. Its target sectors for this rollout are ICT towers, gated communities, shopping centres and commercial parks while both companies will review a bespoke

renewable energy project microgrid pipeline.

The press release added that Kibo has been granted a first right of refusal to any production output that Cellcube establishes in the SADC region delivering CellCube core components or CellCube technology, as long as firm order commitments are made by Kibo.

“As Kibo is aggressively rolling out its Sustainable and Renewable Energy Strategy, we are delighted to announce this dynamic arrangement with a leading flow battery producer. The development of a large project pipeline ready for immediate execution is the main pivot on which the FA hinges,” commented Kibo Energy CEO Louis Coetzee.

Schoenfeldt told Energy-Storage.news: “With vanadium flow batteries it is all about the maturity, durability and mean time before failure (MTBF) and we have a proven track record rather than just a claim. We have an installed field of more than 130 systems in around 20 countries and more than 6 million operating hours of systems. Our oldest system, in Austria, has been running for 11 years and has a capacity loss of just 1% over its lifetime so far. Backed up by (insurer) Munich Re we offer a bankable product ready for roll-out.”

“I"d guess that outside China, in 2021 the vanadium battery supply chain was about 30MW production capacity on an annual basis. It"s peanuts compared to lithium. The big question is how we get our suppliers to ramp up and invest in larger machines and larger tools to move from a 30MW production capacity on an annual basis to a 300MW and then a 3GW annual capacity. I am not saying this because we are waiting for someone, CellCube is actively working with its partners to get this ramped,” he said.

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