

BTC signs bandwidth deal with Zim's Powertel

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The Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC) which provides the country's national and international telecommunications services has signed a US\$5 million deal with Powertel Zimbabwe.

BTC has agreed to provide Powertel with international bandwidth capacity for two years after the two organisations completed cross border fibre optic connections at Ramokgwebana in December 2009.

Powertel is a subsidiary of the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority and under the agreement with BTC will get access to direct international undersea connectivity with the Synchronous Transport Module One (STM1) at a maximum of 155Mbps.

Fibre optic cables are a special communication module that is used to carry data and information and is widely used by Internet service providers and in telecommunication systems and have been tipped to offer lower prices for consumers.

Speaking at Megaleng House, BTC's Head Office, the Head of Wholesale Duncan Pie explained that the agreement with Zimbabwe will run for two years but with an option of extension. He also explained that they intend to engage other regional countries to increase the entire pool of capacity. BTC is already providing 45Mbps to Zambia. With EASSy expected to take off in June capacity is tipped to increase and prices will likely fall.

BTC has already committed to part with P504 million to secure reliable bandwidth connection from an undersea fibre optic through the West African Cable System (WACS). The Group CEO Thapelo Lippe had said that BTC and Telkom Namibia will both contribute equally as second tiers while regional giants like Vodacom, MTN, Neotel and Zain will contribute US\$100 million (approximately P672 million) each for the development of the undersea cable that will link London with Africa.

BTC has also committed US\$210 million into the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy) to further increase Botswana's bandwidth capacity. When the sea cable reaches Botswana, Internet speed connectivity will increase while tariffs will drop significantly. However, the parastatal firm has already slashed prices by 40 percent after it found better rates from an optic fibre provider.

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