



UK crowd has potential to play a critical role in helping 110,000 families in Sub-Saharan Africa secure vital access to clean and affordable solar energy

Two of Europe's leading online impact investing platforms Lendahand and Ethex with support from UK aid and Virgin Unite have launched Energise Africa – putting life changing solar home systems within the financial reach of rural families

Press release: Oxford, 5th October 2017 – Lendahand Ethex Ltd today announced the launch of Energise Africa – a new initiative enabling eligible UK investors to invest in pioneering businesses that install life-changing solar systems in homes in Sub-Saharan Africa – bringing clean energy and economic opportunities to families, whilst aiming to generate up to a 6% annual return for investors. Investors will also be able to benefit from tax free returns by holding their Energise Africa solar investments within an Innovative Finance ISA. Capital is at risk and returns are not guaranteed.

Currently 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity which limits their chance of achieving economic prosperity and improving quality of life. Energise Africa's pioneering solar businesses are installing life-changing solar systems in homes in Sub-Saharan Africa – bringing affordable clean energy and potential economic opportunities to thousands of families. Over a 1 to 2-year period families can make regular monthly payments after which they own the solar home systems outright and are then able to realise further valuable cost savings.

"Solar energy access can be hugely important both from a social development and environmental perspective. Whether it's promoting gender equality, financial inclusion or improving health and education – the impact for families can be significant." stated Lisa Ashford, Director, Lendahand Ethex Ltd

"We are delighted to be working with these great partners to support the development of this platform. Energise Africa addresses one of the key challenges in the off-grid energy space - access to debt. This project will have significant impact in delivering improved energy access, and therefore improved livelihoods, to many families in sub-Saharan Africa." - Rosanne Gray, Managing Director of Virgin Unite.



Energise Africa makes it simple and straight forward for eligible retail investors through to more experienced investors to invest in solar businesses that can deliver a clear social, environmental and financial return. Supported by UK aid from the Department for International Development and Virgin Unite, the non-profit foundation of the Virgin Group, the main objective of Energise Africa is to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the UN agreed Global Goal 7 – universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. At the current rate of development this won't be achieved until 2080 in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Anyone interested in investing can follow Energise Africa's 4 stage process:

1) Choose a solar project to lend money to.

Investors will be lending money to solar businesses working with Energise Africa. Some projects will also benefit from match funding and these are clearly indicated.

2) Lend money to a business.

People can invest as little as £50 in solar businesses, alongside other investors. Once the project is fully funded the money is transferred to the solar business and the interest on the investment starts building. The businesses are able to purchase the solar home systems and start to distribute them to families in rural areas. Investors can monitor the status and impact of their investment by regularly accessing their wallet.

3) New opportunities are created for African families.

The loans provided to the solar businesses are then used to purchase solar home systems which are then provided to African families with an affordable "Pay-as-you-Go" financing plan. Typically, families make monthly payments over a period of 12 – 24 months (depending on the size of the solar system) and then the family owns it outright once all payments have been made.

4) Investors get their money back.

Every six months investors will receive both interest and a capital repayment from their chosen business. These funds can either be repaid or can be reinvested in a new project.

Danny Den Hartog, Managing Director, Lendahand Ethex Ltd stated "We're extremely pleased to have formally launched Energise Africa, and we're delighted to see that during the 8-week pilot phase we have already raised more than £450,000 of investment from more than 150 investors which could help more than 7,000 people gain access to clean electricity."

He goes on to say "We've developed Energise Africa in a way that is much more accessible for people, as eligible investors can invest as little as £50 in making their money do good. With [19.5 million people in the UK](#) already involved or

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wanting to get involved in making sure their savings and investments have impact – Energise Africa provides a straightforward way to do this, especially as investments that fall within the £20,000 allowance per tax year can potentially earn tax-free returns within an Innovative Finance ISA.”

Investing in Energise Africa projects via the [Lendahand.co.uk](https://lendahand.co.uk) site involves risk, including the loss of all of your invested capital, illiquidity (the inability to sell assets quickly or without substantial loss in value), and it should be done only as part of a diversified portfolio.

The investment opportunities on [Lendahand.co.uk](https://lendahand.co.uk) are not an offer to the public in any jurisdiction and are available only to registered members of the platform who have certified that they are eligible to invest. Any person who is not resident in the United Kingdom who wishes to view these investment opportunities must first satisfy themselves that they are eligible to do so under the securities laws and regulations applicable to them. This site does not constitute an offer of, or the solicitation of an offer to buy or subscribe for, any securities to any person in any jurisdiction to whom or in which such offer or solicitation would be unlawful.

In respect of its regulated activities, Lendahand Ethex Ltd is an appointed representative of Share In Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN 603332).

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For further information or to arrange interviews please contact:

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For more information about the UK government’s contribution to the programme, contact the DFID press offices on 0207 023 0600

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Notes to editor

About Energise Africa

Energise Africa is a ground-breaking initiative that provides people with the opportunity to invest in a range of pioneering businesses that install life-changing solar systems in homes in Sub-Saharan Africa – bringing clean energy and economic opportunities to families, whilst aiming to generate a 4-6 % annual return for investors. Your capital is at risk and returns are not guaranteed.

Brought to you by two of Europe's online impact investing platforms Ethex and Lendahand and supported by UK aid and Virgin Unite, Energise Africa intends to provide the critical investment needed to provide more than 110,000 rural families with access to clean and affordable energy over the next 3 years. www.lendahand.co.uk

About Lendahand Ethex Ltd

Two of Europe's leading online investing platforms, Ethex and Lendahand have joined forces to provide UK based retail investors with investment opportunities which will significantly improve off grid energy access for families in Sub Saharan Africa. Both Lendahand and Ethex are well regarded in the social investing space, evidenced by both their large investor base (over 13,500 investors) and an enviable track record of repeat investing which has resulted in both organisations raising a combined £70 million+ for social enterprises, charities and businesses since 2013.

About Ethex

Ethex brings together on one platform the best positive savings and investment opportunities to make it easy to make money do good. On the platform, you can browse, compare and invest in a range of products from bank accounts and ISAs to equity investments and charity bonds that offer a social and environmental as well as a financial return. Since 2013, Ethex has helped raise over £55 million of investment from over 11,000 investors into more than 55 social businesses, charities and community organisations.

www.ethex.org.uk | 01865 403304 | help@ethex.org.uk

About Lendahand

Lendahand is a Dutch based online impact investment platform where socially minded savers and investors can fund SMEs and sustainable initiatives in emerging economies. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in these countries do not have proper access to financing as they are too small for banks and too large and complex for microfinance institutions.

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Hence, they can only provide 30% of the jobs, where 60% in developed countries is the average. Financing companies and sustainable initiatives leads to significant social impact while leaving room for a potential financial return of 3-6% per annum. Since 2013 Lendahand has raised € 19 million from nearly 3000 investors for closing the finance gap in developing countries. By doing so, some 4,000 new jobs have been created in 10 countries and around 3,000 solar home systems have been installed so far.

www.lendahand.com