

Dutch organisation steps up bid to plug Byo water challenges.

Local By Silas Nkala | Sep. 12, 2024



Bulawayo City Council

A DUTCH non-profit organisation, Wetskills Foundation, is this week launching an inaugural Wetskills Challenge to address critical water challenges in Bulawayo, running from tomorrow to September 25 this year.

The foundation is working in collaboration with the Kingdom of the Netherlands embassy to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi, the City of Bulawayo, the National University of Science and Technology and the Green Hut Trust.

In a statement this week, the foundation said the pioneering event was aimed at tackling the pressing water challenges being faced by Zimbabwe and the region through youth-driven innovation and international collaboration.

“The Wetskills Challenge will bring together local, regional and international Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD students, recent graduates and young professionals to develop creative, sustainable solutions for water-related issues exacerbated by climate change,” the foundation said.

“These challenges include droughts, floods and water quality degradation, all of which profoundly impact communities and ecosystems in Zimbabwe and beyond.” ↑

It said the Wetskills Challenge was an international programme aimed at empowering the next generation of water professionals by encouraging creative, practical solutions for real-world water issues.

“For this challenge, local, regional and international students and young professionals from Zimbabwe, Ghana and the Netherlands will work in multi-disciplinary teams to address water-related challenges, such as droughts, floods and water quality degradation, which are increasingly critical in light of climate change,” the organisation said.

“The Wetskills Challenge is a proven, globally recognised approach to fostering innovation through a ‘pressure cooker’ format, where participants solve complex water cases under time constraints.

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“During the two-week programme, participants will undergo an intense series of workshops, field visits, brainstorming sessions and mentorship.”

Indications are that together, the organisations will develop forward-thinking ideas focused on sustainable agriculture, climate-smart solutions, water management and entrepreneurship while strengthening cross-border collaboration.

“The 22 participants, including 18 from Zimbabwe, three from Ghana and one from the Netherlands, will be mentored by experts from the water sector as they develop their solutions.

“The programme will culminate in a final presentation session at the Large City Hall in Bulawayo on September 24, where the teams will showcase their outcomes to an audience of local officials, water professionals and international experts,” the statement read.

The event will feature two-minute solution pitches and a poster market, allowing participants to present their concepts to a high-level jury and stakeholders.

“Attendees will include case owners, high-level water sector professionals, officials from Bulawayo, the mayor and the Netherlands ambassador to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi,” the foundation said.

The foundation said participants would be expected to tackle real-life water challenges presented by the City of Bulawayo and the Green Hut Trust.

“The Wetskills Challenge in Bulawayo promises to energise, integrate and capacitate future water leaders while fostering international co-operation to address global water challenges. The programme is designed to equip participants with practical skills and generate solutions that have a tangible impact on communities, industries, and ecosystems in Zimbabwe and the wider region.”

Wetskills Foundation is a Dutch non-profit organisation that has organised water challenges in over 29 countries worldwide.

Its goal is to inspire young professionals to take on global water challenges through innovative, interdisciplinary problem-solving.

Bulawayo is facing the worst water challenge in years, with council indicating that it will be increasing water-shedding to 144 hours.

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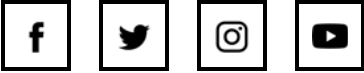
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