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Old gold mine becomes hydro-power provider

AN ABANDONED north Queensland gold mine could soon be transformed into a renewable energy hub large enough to power half the state.

State Development Minister Anthony Lynham yesterday announced Genex Power's \$580 million energy hub earmarked for Kidston, about 280km northwest of Townsville, would be granted special status as a prescribed project.

It meant the project's approvals process would be fast-tracked and construction could begin as early as the end of the year. The project would use infrastructure left behind after the 2001 closure of the Kidston gold mine.

Dr Lynham said the project, which would create more than 500 jobs, proposed a 150-megawatt solar power generation farm and a 330-megawatt pumped storage hydro-electric scheme using the mine pits.

It would also include a 185km transmission line to carry power to the coast and the main Powerlink line between Townsville and Cairns.

"(It's) a world-first by using a disused mine for hydro-electric power generation," Dr Lynham said.

He said it would help the Government reach its target of having 50 per cent of Queensland's power needs met by renewable energy by 2030.