

Significant progress at Boikarabelo

Ria Wells

STEENBOKPAN — Mogol Post recently visited the site on which the Boikarabelo mine is to be established. The change since the last visit is significant and many projects have started already.

The mine is located about 65 km from Lephalale in the Steenbokpan area.

There are currently only five permanent staff members on the premises. RSV ENCO has been assigned to manage the engineering works, procurement, construction and management of the major portions of the works.

There are five main segments, namely rail, coal handling & processing plant, mining machinery, infrastructure and the 132 kV power line.

Earthworks for the 40 km railway line where large areas have already been cleared next to the Steenbokpan Road, are financed by Noble and managed by RSV together with RCE Engineers.

Protech Khutele is engaged in the construction of the railway. The farms where the railway will be built were bought by Resgen - that is in addition to the 11 farms purchased for the mining operations. Most of the farms are being used for nature conservancy with the mine in the middle. Earthworks for the development of the initial temporary construction village for approximately 200 people have been completed and earthworks in order to expand the temporary construction village to accommodate 1 300 people have started.

A binding term sheet was signed with FL Smidth for the construction of the coal handling and preparation plant (CHPP).

Associated with this, discussions have progressed for export credit agency support.

Funding discussions for the purchase or lease of mobile (yellow) equipment, Komatsu and Caterpillar, are at an advanced stage.

The offices and workshops will be erected under supervision of RSV ENCO as well as the public road from Steenbokpan to the mine, dumps and dams.

Resgen approached DBSA for the financing of the waste water works at Marapong that are still in a design phase with the prospect that the construction of the treatment plant as well as the pipe line will be built in 2015.

There are currently six local students from Boikarabelo studying at the FET College, five bursars studying at the University of Pretoria (Tuks) and four part-time students from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Tuks recently did vacation work at the mine over Christmas.

Social and labour plan projects are in place and Resgen held public meetings with the local communities last year and these will recommence in February.

Their aim is to maximize the use of local people during the construction phase, with all unskilled labour being sourced locally and a minimum of 40% of skilled labour for construction being local labour.

Currently there are over 60 people on site and the Boikarabelo HR Manager is busy training a pool of about 40 people as temporary workers, called the Lesedi Skills Pool. If these trainees can prove



Preparations for the railway line next to the Steenbokpan Road are in progress



(Photos supplied)

that they are trainable, reliable and hardworking, the chances are that they could gain longer term employment with one of the contractors.

All regulatory hurdles have been overcome, all necessary land has been acquired and the company has

rail haulage and port access contracts sufficient for Boikarabelo's stage 1 production.

Construction is expected to take two years and subject to agreements on funding, coal production is expected to start in December 2015.