

Saldanha Bay Municipality partners with Bell to provide service delivery

Grave digging is challenging work for the Saldanha Bay Municipality in the Western Cape where a heavy and cumbersome metal frame has to be inserted into graves to prevent the soft sand from falling into the freshly dug hole.

According to the Municipality's Plant Manager, Gert Beneke, the Municipality digs an average of 60 graves per month at its seven cemeteries and this task is a unique test of a tractor loader backhoe's ability. Not all TLBs are capable of this work but the Municipality has been well impressed with the ease at which their Bell TLBs can insert the metal frame and remove it again, which can be even trickier.

The Municipality's 450-strong fleet of vehicles and earthmoving equipment includes three such Bell TLBs, with another five on order, as well as a Bell L1506 Wheeled Loader and a Bomag BC472RB Refuse Compactor, which are critical tools assisting the Municipality in their service delivery efforts.

The Saldanha Bay Municipality forms part of the West Coast District Municipality and covers 2 015 square kilometres. With a population of almost 100 000 people it is comprised of the coastal towns of Langebaan, Saldanha, Jacobsbaai, Paternoster and St Helena Bay as well as the inland towns of Hopefields and Vredenberg, where the main mechanical workshop is situated.



While the area is exceptionally picturesque and a huge tourism attraction, particularly when the wildflowers are in full bloom, the Municipality's coffers are largely kept afloat due to its rates base, which includes several large companies such as Transnet, which has a steady stream of trains with about 400 wagons each, transporting iron ore from Sishen in the Northern Cape to the Saldanha area.

In the Saldanha area the iron ore is transported to industries, such as Saldanha Steel, for processing and a large portion is loaded directly onto ships for export to China.

The Municipality is also home to an industrial development zone, with a planned R250 million port expansion project promising to bring a huge financial injection to the Western Cape region.

Providing the backbone to the area, the Saldanha Bay Municipality is focused on service delivery - constructing and maintaining road infrastructure, water purification and supply, waste water management, electrical supply and maintenance as well as solid waste services.

Due to their versatility the Bell TLBs are used for road maintenance and construction but, perhaps most importantly, they are on standby to be used after hours for the opening of sewerage lines.

The first Bell TLB was a Bell 315SG, which the Municipality bought in 2004. This was followed in 2013 with the delivery of two of Bell Equipment's latest model, the Bell 315SK, which replaced two older machines that were put out to pasture. Gert says: "That Bell 315SG is still one of the best machines in our fleet in terms of its condition. The operator looks after the machine, and is so precise with his maintenance, that he says he doesn't want a new one."

Completing the Municipality's Bell fleet are a Bomag BC472RB Refuse Compactor, which was bought in 2011, and a Bell L1506 Wheeled Loader, which was delivered in 2014.

The Municipality's main landfill site is outside Vredenberg and receives an average of 5 000 tonnes of household refuse per month making it a favourite gathering place for a huge flock of seagulls which arrive at the site every day to scavenge.

Says Gert: "While the Bomag is probably more technologically advanced than we require for the application, the built-in engine protection system is advantageous. The machine is necessary for us to comply with legislation relating to landfill sites to prevent pollution. Being a purpose-built machine it is very efficient at compacting and levelling our landfill site and then we make use of the Bell Wheeled Loader to carry loads of sand to cover the landfill area."