

# Sitona Mining Group replaces old excavators with new Kobelco machines

**The field of material handling, especially in the mining industry, may seem to the layman as a less volatile area than that of contract mining. Clients with material handling needs however demand high machine availabilities and quite rightly so for if their material or product is not moved timeously, company revenues and ultimately return on shareholder investment will suffer.**

One company that fully appreciates this is Sitona Mining Group of Companies working out of Rustenburg. Founded in 2005 by Walter Kinnear, the company has shown steady and sustained growth over time and is now a recognised player in the competitive material handling market in the platinum and chrome mining belt in the North West Province. Further offerings include opencast mining, blasting, plant hire, transport, civil construction (surface and underground) and mine based training.

Kinnear realised early on that given the demands of their industry, it was vital that his company builds its reputation on delivering sustained service in various fields using new reliable equipment, which is operated and maintained by trained personnel. "What makes our industry different is that we work 24 hours a day and 365 days a year with some of our sites raking up 10 000 hours per loader within 18 months," he has been quoted as saying. "This is part of the reason that within a year of our founding, we formed a long-term business relationship with a reputable original equipment manufacturer (OEM) such as Bell Equipment for the majority of our earthmoving and material handling equipment needs. Offering new and well-maintained machines to clients has always set us apart and ensured repeat business."

Over more than a decade since its founding, Sitona Mining Services has relied heavily on equipment manufactured, sold and maintained by Bell Equipment, at first buying three Bell B20D Articulated Dump Trucks, two Bell 315SG Tractor Loader Backhoes and a Bell 1206 Rigid Tractor with a 9-cubic metre dump trailer. Many models in the OEM's range of Wheeled Loaders of both the D- and E-series machines have seen service in Sitona's varied operations where they have

racked up high hour numbers. 2018 saw three new Bell L1806Es and one Bell L2706E Wheeled Loader joining the fleet.

According to Hannes Beket, Sitona's Plant Director, the company has a policy of replacing machines on an integrated costing model. And so, in mid-2018, when the company landed increased material handling contracts on two new sites, it was time to replace older excavators with newer models.

"We have been very impressed with the product offering Bell Equipment has in its new range of Kobelco Excavators and we appreciate the machine's pedigree," Hannes says. "Our needs on the two new material handling sites called for 25-ton machines but we were very confident in the performance potential of the Kobelco SK260LC-8 Excavator."

Since their arrival on the sites in the second half of 2018, the two Kobelco SK260LC-8 Excavators have performed admirably for their owners and clients. One is fitted with ground engaging tools on its 1,4 cubic metre bucket while it stockpiles and moves chrome ore. The second machine, working in an area where material is moved on a concrete base on a platinum mine, has a half-arrow straight edge on its bucket. Due to the abrasive quality of the material in which the machines work, the buckets take on a very sporty bare metal look and almost look chrome plated.

"Such is our faith in the quality of the Kobelco Excavators' design and build coupled with Bell Equipment's reliable support, especially under warranty, that we have not extended the warranties on these machines," Hannes adds. "We generally work on dry rates but keeping a close eye on fuel consumption on any machine gives us valuable feedback coupled with the competitive fuel consumption per hour on all of the Bell range of equipment. These Kobelco SK260LC-8 Excavators are fast winning support with our clients."

He adds that dry chrome ore generally reflects high specific gravities but as it retains a lot of water

the density increases further and still the Kobelco SK260LC-8 Excavator performs admirably while consuming diesel fuel frugally.

"Our operators have taken to the Kobelco machines quite seamlessly and their performance has convinced us that a Kobelco 26-ton machine easily bridges the gap to 30-ton equipment before one needs to look at larger machines," he says. "The machines' pricing is competitive and if all goes well, we'll be looking to add to our fleet of Kobelco Excavators."

