

# Windhoek Renovations meets the plant hire needs of massive Neckartal Dam project

*The past few years were marked by international economic downturn, large scale unemployment, tighter regulatory controls, increased consumer education and awareness as well as financial challenges that had not been experienced before.*

Traditional business models no longer seem to be working as effectively as before and doing business has become one of the most challenging tasks. Several companies have had to face foreclosure, staff retrenchments or mergers and acquisitions in an attempt to survive this storm.

Despite these challenges, Windhoek Renovations, a reputable Namibian company, has successfully managed to navigate its way through the storm and has continued to focus on its passion and core services offering. This sense of purpose has provided them with the courage to persevere and their inspiring journey will hopefully inspire other companies to keep trying despite the many challenges that abound.

Windhoek Renovations, a construction plant hire company, is located in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, and was founded by Robby Wirtz in 1987.

Robby, who had worked in the motor industry for several years, decided to leave this industry to establish and gradually expand a renovation and construction company. After having worked in the construction industry for several years he felt he needed a new challenge and started hiring out construction plant. In 2013 he saw that the demand for his services was beginning to exceed his capacity as a sole business owner and he approached Johan van Wyk, a friend and reliable businessman, to offer him a business partnership. For three consecutive years Johan had been one of the Top 10 Bell Equipment Salesmen in Africa and had also spent several years working

as a Namibian Sales Representative for Bell. It was during this time that he acquired extensive knowledge of earthmoving equipment, people and business practices. He has been a member of Windhoek Renovations since October 2013.

Since then, the Windhoek Renovations' fleet of yellow plant hire machines has grown from 35 to more than 90 machines and various attachments. Johan says: "We believe that Windhoek Renovations is unique because we are able to provide our clients with a comprehensive package in terms of their equipment needs." He adds: "If a client needs plant hire in the construction industry, we are able to offer them amongst others graders, compaction equipment, water tankers, wheel loaders and excavators, and we believe we are the only local company that can provide such an extensive range of earthmoving equipment for hire. We started to experience rapid growth ever since we took a conscious decision to supply a full service offering to clients, which judging by our growth is what our market appreciates."

Their latest project is the Neckartal Dam, which is currently being built on the Fish River and is located in the Karas region of Namibia. The country is located in the south-western region of Africa and boasts the most breathtaking and diverse landscapes in the world. It has been voted the number one travel destination and, with a population of 2,3 million spread across a total area of 824 292km<sup>2</sup>, is among the most sparsely populated countries in the world.

The Karas region takes its name from the Nama word 'Karas' which means 'Quiver Tree'. This region covers 161 235km<sup>2</sup>, which almost represents 20% of the surface area of the entire country.

The Karas region's arid, pest and insect free climate is nourished by the waters from the Orange and Fish rivers. These rivers make the area an ideal location for abundant, lush crops. This region has been acknowledged and praised for the size and scope of its four pristine and delicately balanced desert ecosystems, which are home to many of the planet's most exceptional natural wonders. These wonders include the Kalahari and Namib deserts and the Fish River Canyon.

The Neckartal Dam is set to become the largest water storage dam in Namibia and will provide an almost 5 000 hectare irrigation scheme with irrigation water for fruit cultivation. The construction of this dam is currently ranked as the most substantial project in terms of water storage construction in southern Africa.

According to published information, the idea of a dam on the Fish River was first conceived by German colonisers more than 100 years ago but did not come to fruition until Namibia won independence from South Africa in 1990. It then took more than two decades before a building tender was held. With a future height of about 80m and a crest length of 518m, Neckartal will be a curved gravity dam. It will have an intake tower housing pipe, valves and gates to bring the water,

captured by the future reservoir, to a chamber with two 1,5-megawatt Francis turbines.

The main contractor for the construction of the dam is Salini Impregilo, an industrial and dynamic group specialising in the construction of major, complex projects. Operating in over 50 countries with 35 000 employees, a turnover of around € 6,1 billion and a backlog of € 37 billion, Salini Impregilo is a global player in the construction sector and the leading global infrastructure company in the water segment.

One of Salini Impregilo's primary challenges was to find reputable and well-equipped local Namibian plant hire companies that could minimise the need to import earthmoving plant equipment from South Africa or from abroad.

It was during this stage of the project that Salini Impregilo contacted Windhoek Renovations to provide the backbone of the plant hire needs.

Windhoek Renovations supplies an extensive range of plant hire equipment to both local and regional

construction projects. Its unique service offering of an extensive fleet of Liebherr excavators that are fitted with specialised tools, such as hydraulic hammers, rock splitters, grinder and vibrating rippers and rammers was what gained Windhoek Renovations entry into the Neckartal Dam project and from there, demand for their other machines grew.

Robby commented: "Our approach was quite straightforward as we started off on a small scale by sub-contracting to another sub-contractor. We realised soon enough





that we had the capacity to fulfill more of the requirements in terms of equipment that was needed on this massive project. In time, we expanded our share of the project to include plant hire as well as direct contracting services. “As the local agents for Liebherr, we naturally support the brand but whatever they can’t supply, we source from Bell Equipment. In 2008 we purchased our first Bell 770D Grader and we’ve subsequently expanded our Bell Grader fleet to include 772G and 670G models as they are sought after in the hire market.”

Due to its 80m-high curved concrete wall the Neckartal Dam construction requires aggregate rock, which is being sourced from a quarry located fairly close to the construction site. The rock had to be extracted and Windhoek Renovations provided its range of Bell B40D and B30D Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) for this specific task.

Johan stated: “When working in the excruciating 42 degree Celsius heat and dust of such a quarry, hauling heavy dolomite rock to the crusher, nothing can match our Bell ADTs in terms of performance and durability. Our Site Foreman, Mike Lipman, does a sterling job of monitoring the equipment and has put in place

preventative maintenance processes to ensure sustained uptime of the equipment throughout the extraction from the quarry.”

Windhoek Renovations also carries a wide variety of Bell Equipment spares onsite and Norman van Wyk from Bell Equipment Namibia does his best to ensure that their orders for parts are executed accurately and promptly.

Having completed the excavation of almost 800 000m<sup>3</sup> of earth and rock on the riverbed and the construction of abutments on either side of it, workers started building the foundation of the dam with the use of Windhoek Renovations’ earthmoving equipment, one layer of concrete at a time. This method is called roller-compacted concrete, which is faster and economically advantageous in respect to other methods.

In 2014 Windhoek Renovations identified the need for a 30-ton ADT and they decided to purchase a new Bell B30E ADT, which is being used specifically for this process of spreading roller-compacted concrete on the dam wall. This layering and compacting process is used to build a higher dam wall. Initially rigid tippers were used to convey the

concrete but their narrow tyres left marks in the wet concrete. The wider and high-floatation tyres of the Bell B30E ADT and its low ground impact made this the ideal haulage machine to convey the concrete to the dam wall.

“There has been such a huge demand for this particular Bell B30E ADT that it has clocked up more than 9 000 hours in the three years that we’ve owned it,” Johan explains. “We believe that our ability to sustain this demand definitely means high mechanical availability and that the Bell B30E ADT is delivering on its promise.”

Johan is also full of praise for the Bell B25D Water Tanker fitted with a 23 000 litre tank, which was purchased on the open market at 9 000 hours. With its clock now showing an excess of 19 000 hours, this water tanker continues to dampen the Namibian dust that prevails throughout this project.

“The same praise goes to our two Bomag BW212 Rollers and the Bomag BW213 Roller, again supplied by Bell Equipment, that continue to perform at optimum levels for this large project,” he adds. “Quality of design and build coupled with diligent maintenance is definitely a recipe for success even in the arid and challenging locations where we work.”

A substantial plant hire range, attachments and an unrelenting passion for what they do have provided Windhoek Renovations with a substantial growth of 124% over the last four years. Both Robby and Johan believe that once the Neckartal Dam has been completed, the Windhoek Renovations brand will continue to expand and grow because of their shared commitment and the goodwill they have created with their reliable brightly-coloured yellow equipment and attention to sustainable performance and quality.



Wolfgang Schweiger (General Manager of Bell Equipment Namibia) with Johan van Wyk (Member, Windhoek Renovations), John Collins (General Manager: Bell Equipment Cape and Namibia Region) and Mike Lipman (Site Foreman on the Neckartal Dam Project, Windhoek Renovations).