

Kobelco with a JCB hydraulic hammer hits the sweet spot

The terrain where new water infrastructure is being installed in an area known as Mdantsane Unit 2 on East London's west side, is both hilly and rocky and a civil engineering contractor simply had to find another way to penetrate the thick layer of rock to dig trenches to the required depth.



Blasting the rock was not an option either due to the many hundreds of houses in the immediate vicinity of where the water and sewer pipes were being laid.

Being a civil engineer, Mathew Chisango is used to overcoming environmental and construction challenges by thinking well outside the proverbial box but on this contract for the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, he was concerned. "My company, Excellect 281, was tasked with digging six-metre deep trenches in which water and sewer piping would be laid with manholes interspersed at regular intervals," he says.

"We however encountered thick layers of sedimentary rock that prevented us from getting down to the required levels where the piping needs to go to ensure continuous flows. As we couldn't blast the rock, this posed a serious problem."

Mathew founded Excellect 281 in East London in 2011 and the company has recently moved its skills level upwards from a 7 CEPE to an 8 CEPE level, which means it can now tender on much larger infrastructure projects. Mathew and his company have worked all over the Eastern Cape but are now also looking further afield.

"Where we mainly concentrated on water-related infrastructure projects for the likes of municipalities, this higher accreditation level now allows us to tender on road projects, constructing roads from base course level to black top which is an exciting prospect," he adds.

"Contracts are awarded over longer periods which allows one the relative luxury of proper planning for capital expenditure on things like yellow machines and light and heavy vehicles."

Excellect is not new to owning its own yellow machine fleet as after learning the tough lessons of how expensive plant hire can be, Mathew started off ownership with a backhoe loader bought on the used market before buying his company's first new JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader in 2021. This machine's reliability and efficiency was so profound that early in 2022 a second similar JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader doubled the fleet of new machines at Excellect.

"By now I was confident of whom to contact when in need of sound advice about earthmoving equipment and it was to Bell Equipment, the distributors of JCB and other superior equipment that I turned, contacting Anthony Enslin, the company's Sales Representative here in East London," Mathew says. "I explained our challenge of the sedimentary rock to Anthony. He immediately suggested that I look at the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator fitted with a hydraulic hammer to break the rock."

"We had hired in an excavator fitted with such a hammer, but I felt the importance of the contract justified a new, reliable and powerful machine that would be a real asset to our business.

The Kobelco SK220XD-10, with proper technical backing such as that which we've received thus far from Bell Equipment, is exactly that."

Mathew was able to make use of a revolving credit facility with a major banking group and took delivery of the new Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator in August 2022. The machine was delivered with the hydraulic hammer already fitted. The standard one-cubic metre bucket was included in the delivery and will be used once the rock in the trenches has been broken.

"This Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator has been on my wish list for a while and seeing it work immediately after it was delivered fills me with pride and confidence. Now I feel we're getting somewhere as a civil construction company to be taken seriously," Mathew says smiling.

"From all accounts, the Kobelco Excavators use less fuel than competitor machines in the same mass class and backed by a 36-month/5 000-hour warranty from Bell Equipment, we are seriously good to go and accept the challenges of bigger contracts."



From left: Owner of Excellect 281 cc, Mathew Chisango, and Excellect 281's Workshop Manager, Nomatter Bhomani, with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Anthony Enslin.