

JCB Backhoe is indispensable on Paarl housing development

Imagine one JCB Backhoe Loader taking multitasking to new stratospheric levels as it is used amongst no less than fifty-six building sites in a luxury lifestyle estate. If this sounds far-fetched, you'd better believe it because we can prove it!



Warren Labuschagne and his older brother, Gary, started their working lives being self-employed and making doors for the low-cost housing market. Once they had mastered the art and could easily make five doors a day, they soon found themselves making 250 doors daily and then started looking around for new challenges.

"We bought three plots of land in Bloubergstrand near Cape Town and intended building a house each and a third one for speculative purposes to sell," Warren tells us. "This worked out just fine and soon we were building other houses full-time and doing so as far up the coast as Yzerfontein."

The brothers have since each followed their own direction and Warren, with his company Bergstrems Developments, has since 2006 created a niche in the luxury housing market in a well-known lifestyle estate near Paarl, in the heart of the Cape Winelands.

"We employ five architects and four quantity surveyors along with a host of site foremen who all combine to make a future homeowner's wishes come true," Warren says. "It takes careful planning and cost control to build a luxury home to high standards and finishes and we have many challenges, like steel doubling in price and the cost of glass increasing 13 times."

We've had no choice but to absorb these increases over the past year."

But despite these challenges, Bergstrems Developments has built over 300 homes in this one estate since 2006 and will soon be looking to continue that trend in a linked estate in Paarl, where entry-level houses will be the norm.

"Working to the tight completion deadlines that we have, we'd never manage without some mechanical help. Before the COVID pandemic brought our industry to a standstill we had a used JCB 3CX Backhoe Loader that we'd bought from some friends who farmed," Warren continues. "We had bought the machine on 4 000 hours and when we sold it, not knowing how long the pandemic would last, it had done 8 000 hours. We actually made a profit, which points to the machine's quality and proven resale value."

Once Bergstrems Developments could resume building, a need gradually arose to again own a Backhoe Loader as hired machines were expensive and not always reliable. "With homeowners now wanting their building projects completed, our workload increased dramatically and hiring in similar machines became a stumbling block," Warren adds. "This is when I started researching the market for a new backhoe loader."

Warren recalls speaking to salesmen selling other brands and when asked what the most popular backhoe loader was, many suggested he look at the JCB brand, now sold and supported by Bell Equipment.

"In the end it was an easy decision especially when Fiona Johnson, Bell Equipment's knowledgeable Sales Representative told me about the favourable financing deal that JCB Finance was offering through ABSA Bank.

"The decision to buy a JCB 3CX Global backhoe loader was quickly made and once ordered in March 2022, we were happy to take delivery two months later in May." With his dynamic team working on up to 56 building sites at a time and the demand for the lone JCB 3CX Global Backhoe Loader never waning, Warren has designed a clever app with which the various building teams can reserve the machine for their sites on a given day and time.

"You may well imagine that our JCB 3CX Global Backhoe Loader is known as a versatile machine and its many applications certainly confirm that," Warren says. "We use it extensively to clear sites prior to test pits being dug to test the soil, excavate for foundations and dig trenches for water reticulation and other services."

"Fortunately, we still have the operator who had worked with our previous JCB Backhoe Loader and he is diligent in the daily checks prior to operating the machine and doing preventative maintenance that we know is important for longevity of any plant. The machine is so well utilised at this point that we have not yet had the opportunity to determine exactly how much fuel it uses, but for now we're not too concerned with that."

Bergstrems Developments' JCB 3CX Global Backhoe Loader has been bought with a standard warranty of 12 months and unlimited hours and all servicing under warranty is done by Bell Equipment working out of Cape Town. The option of a service contract, that will ensure the same once the warranty has expired, is being considered.

Warren believes that should the hectic pace that his construction teams set diminish, he could possibly hire out his JCB 3CX Backhoe Loader on a plant hire basis but as things stand now with the machine split between more than 50 building sites, we don't see that happening in a hurry.



Bell Sales Representative, Fiona Johnson, with the MD of Bergstrems Developments, Warren Labuschagne.