

Kobelco Excavator fleet performing well on wind turbine project

When Stanley van der Burgh first bought a Bell Backhoe Loader in 1995 with the aim of offering limited plant hire to the mining industry in and around Witbank, little did he know that in less than three decades, he would be mining his own coal reserves using in excess of three hundred and fifty mining machines and thus becoming one of the largest coal miners in private ownership in South Africa.

When Stanley van der Burgh first bought a Bell Backhoe Loader in 1995 with the aim of offering limited plant hire to the mining industry in and around Witbank, little did he know that in less than three decades, he would be mining his own coal reserves using in excess of 350 mining machines and thus becoming one of the largest coal miners in private ownership in South Africa.

Since selling Burgh Group Holdings (Pty) Ltd, of which Burgh Plant Hire was a subsidiary, Stanley and his son, Devan, have embarked on yet another exciting venture also involving mostly yellow and even some turquoise-coloured mining equipment.

Devan takes up the story: "My dad and I founded Inceku Mining in 2017 with Inceku being the isiZulu word for 'servant to God the king'. Our core business initially was to



Bell Sales Representative (left), Johnny Smit, with Devan van der Burgh, Director of Inceku Mining/ Inceku Green Projects.

offer plant hire to the mining and renewable energy industries and, more recently, we planned to once again mine our own coal reserves."

The Van der Burgh's started their new business with new machines and offered plant hire in the iron ore and chrome mining industries. They employ 450 people full-time and hire local people in areas where mining contracts take them. With hiring from local communities, training and upliftment is a given and even when contracts end Inceku Mining is comfortable with skills that are retained as a legacy of their time in a particular area.

With their moderately ambitious plans coming to fruition, they found that new mining equipment that suited their purposes was a scarce commodity in South Africa. These plans also included venturing into mining in Namibia and Zambia.

"In 2021 we realised that with mining our own coal resources becoming imminent as well as exploring potential value-added ventures in plant hire, we needed to find a fleet of new loading tools and haulage vehicles that would prove to be reliable.

With any contract, whether it be for a client or ourselves, positive production figures through sustainable uptime are key drivers," Devan explains. "We researched the market thoroughly, but Bell Equipment came up tops as the only supplier that could help us with what we initially needed, and that was supplying a fleet of 10 B45E Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs)."

Referring to ventures in plant hire, in early 2023 Inceku Mining became aware of a contract that called for the use of excavators on a large wind turbine project between Matjiesfontein and Sutherland on the Western Cape and Northern Cape border.

"This renewable energy project will see the erection of 39 wind turbines. As it's spread out along some rocky ridges along which access roads must be carved out of the rocky Karoo soils, the project needed some hardy excavators that could carry out the grunt work before the turbines could be erected," Devan says. "As part of our joint venture contract we have with a subsidiary plant hire company, in which we have a vested interest, we needed to supply three 26-ton and two 30-ton excavators, and we've done this under our own banner of Inceku Green Projects."

Devan mentions that they once again approached Bell Equipment through the company's local Sales Representative for the Witbank and Middelburg area, Johnny Smit, to find out more about Kobelco Excavators after having researched the wider excavator market.

"We've come to rely on Johnny's excellent knowledge of Bell Equipment's comprehensive product range. Knowing that Kobelco Excavators have a proven reputation of being well-designed and built machines, especially in the challenging Karoo climate where it can be extremely hot or extremely cold, we felt comfortable in committing to buy three Kobelco SK260LC-10 and two Kobelco SK300LC-10 Excavators, which were delivered directly to the site of the wind turbine project in June 2023."



Although they were delivered with general purpose buckets of 1,4 cubic-metres for the 26-ton and 1,7 cubic-metres capacities for the 30-ton machines, all five of the Kobelco Excavators have been fitted with hydraulic hammers from a third party. This is because they are being deployed to break up the stubborn Karoo shale surface where first the access roads are being built and later the huge foundations for the wind turbines will be constructed.

"We chose the Kobelco Excavators as we enjoy the Hino engines they have and my dad is a firm believer in specific component combinations working well together, which he has seen to be the case with Kobelco Excavators," Devan expands. "We further believe that Kobelco Excavators offer excellent value for money and should give us a solid return on our investment."

"We've also been pleasantly surprised that the average fuel burn of the Kobelco 30-ton machines is the same as the 26-ton Excavators at 13,2 litres an hour. Even though diesel fuel is supplied by our clients, we believe this is very economical fuel consumption considering the heavy work the machines are engaged in and attribute it to the excellent hydraulic flows the Kobelco Excavators are known for in many varied applications," Devan says. "We further ensured that the maintenance on the Kobelco Excavators would not be left to chance with a 12-month Bell Care Package from Bell Equipment with the company's mechanics driving up from Cape Town to conduct servicing."

