

Two 38-ton Kobelco Excavators impress at Raubex

Two thirty-eight-ton Kobelco Excavators are fast justifying their purchase by one of South Africa's most well-known multidisciplinary construction companies and, in doing so, they are proving their acquisition and subsequent application to be the correct decisions.

Raubex was established in 1974 and through steady growth listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in March 2007 as the Raubex Group Limited. The company is one of South Africa's leading infrastructure development and construction materials supply groups. It's a dynamic organisation that has moved with the times as its Level 1 B-BBEE rating shows and, with more than 8 000 employees, the company is focused on ensuring high levels of integrity, professionalism, and quality in all that it does and produces. Raubex operates throughout Southern Africa and Western Australia.

Raubex Construction is a major part of the Raubex Group and has the construction of roads and various infrastructure projects as its core business. This work includes new road construction, the rehabilitation of existing roads, bridges, dams, tailings dams for mines and many other challenging civil engineering projects.

Being a civil engineering concern, the company runs a substantial fleet of yellow machine equipment. Some 23 years ago, Raubex Construction established its mechanical workshops in Bethlehem in the Eastern Free State and it's here that we find Bennie Burger, the company's Senior Plant Manager.

"You may find it strange that we established our mechanical workshops here in Bethlehem and not in a major centre, but the thinking was that due to the relatively remote areas where we sometimes work, especially when working on road construction, Bethlehem is quite centrally situated and many of our projects are easily accessible from here," he says. "We employ 65 people in total which includes administrative staff, qualified diesel mechanics, people in the parts department, stores, and operators. The mechanics go out to render field servicing and repair when machines can't be brought to the workshop."

"When doing work on state contracts, wherever that may be, we generally have to hire equipment and labour to the value of 30% of the total contract value from local communities in the immediate vicinity of the project and this often sees the gap being filled for small plant like rollers and backhoe loaders."

Raubex's fleet of construction and earthmoving fleet is substantial and comprises graders, recyclers, dozers, wheel loaders, tipper- and water trucks, articulated dump trucks, rollers and excavators. The company believes in obtaining the maximum life out of any

piece of equipment and when that machine life is deemed to no longer be economically viable, the equipment is sold out of hand with a complete service history.

"We recently needed to add two machines to our excavator fleet in the 40-ton class and while researching the market we came across Kobelco Excavators, which we saw are distributed in South Africa by Bell Equipment," Bennie says. "Although our subsidiary company B & E International has run these and heavier Kobelco Excavators successfully, Raubex had never owned any models of this Japanese brand until we spoke to Chris Botha, the Bell Equipment Sales Representative who visits us diligently, and we found out more about this seemingly great brand of excavator."

Raubex Construction needed two excavators. One would be deployed on a major road rehabilitation project, which would see the machine loading blasted quarry rock for processing into aggregate and the other would be fitted with a hydraulic hammer on a bridge project of a further phase of the Highlands Water Project in Lesotho.



“Everything seemed right for us to choose the two Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavators as Bell Equipment had stock of the two machines at a competitive price and they had the correct hydraulic piping for us to fit a hydraulic hammer, albeit from a third party,” Bennie explains. “We were also impressed with the reinforced undercarriage and buckets on the machines, which we then duly ordered and received in June 2023.”

Bell Heavy Industries (BHI), Bell Equipment’s contract manufacturing division, manufactures all medium and large excavator buckets for the Kobelco Excavators it sells locally. These buckets fit South African conditions given that the machines are often used to load dense and abrasive mined material and blasted rock.

Bennie mentions that since both machines started work on their respective sites, both have performed admirably with no reported downtime in their first 1 000 hours of service. An average fuel burn of 18,4 litres an hour has been a pleasant surprise and fits the business plan of both projects.

“While we acknowledge that our first two Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavators are still new, we’d like to imagine that given their present impressive performances with frugal fuel burn as a bonus, we’ll be adding more of these machines in their distinctive turquoise livery to our fleet,” Bennie says. “And knowing that Kobelco Excavators are backed up by Bell Equipment, a company with its own established wide national and cross-border footprint, trained personnel and proven parts holding, it will provide a winning combination that will be hard to beat.”



Raubex’s Senior Plant Manager, Bennie Burger (left) with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Chris Botha.