

Botswana's Lerala diamond mine gets a new lease on life

Lerala diamond mine in Botswana has commenced production following a nine-month upgrade and recommissioning project.

Starting in August 2015, mine owner, Kimberley Diamonds (KDL) entered into a lump-sum turnkey contract with engineering firm, Consulmet, to modify the mine's plant, so that it could treat and recover diamonds at a nominal rate of 200 tonnes per hour.



Lerala diamond mine, Botswana

Full production expected soon

A potential alluvial deposit in the tailings dam footprint - that needed to be explored - delayed the work slightly, but ore processing has now commenced through the plant and will be ramped up to full production levels over the next several weeks.

During this phase, the plant process is being balanced to optimise recovery efficiency and plant throughput. Personnel, recruited and trained over the past few months, has been working alongside Consulmet's specialists to commission the plant and to progress to 24/7 continuous operations in the next week.

Evaluation results positive

Earlier this year, Venmyn Deloitte conducted an independent evaluation on the mine. Its findings showed that the diamond resources and ore reserves were reasonable, based on the information available and assumptions used, and provide a suitable basis for a mineral asset valuation.

The preferred mineral asset valuation for Lerala is R1,158m, within a valuation range of R606m to R1,412m. The planned life of mine (LOM) was extended from seven to nine years.

Mining operations on track

The mining contract for Lerala was awarded to Basil Read Mining Botswana after a competitive tender process. The miner mobilised staff and equipment to the site during February and March and work commenced early in April on the K3

kimberlite pipe.

Operations will continue to develop a buffer stockpile of fresh kimberlite ore, and will then ramp up in line with the current production schedule to provide a consistent feed to the processing plant once processing commences.

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