

Best practice mine closure achieved

Vedanta Zinc International (VZI) has received a mine closure completion certificate for its Lisheen mine in Ireland, a significant achievement for the mine and the international zinc producer.



Vedanta Zinc International's (VZI) Lisheen mine in Ireland has received a mine closure completion certificate

This concludes the mine closure plan that started in 2015 and was completed in 2018. “It has been a long journey for all of those that have been involved. We are extremely proud of this achievement. Receiving a notice of completion from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is no small feat, and this is a monumental victory for sustainability in the mining industry,” said Pushpender Singla, VZI executive director and CFO.

Lisheen, an underground lead and zinc mine, produced approximately 1.18-million tonnes of tailings per annum, approximately 60% of which were deposited in the tailings management facility located adjacent to the plant site, covering a footprint of approximately 70 hectares.

Achieving closure

The development of the closure plan at Lisheen was a significant task and required considerable resources from Lisheen from 2016 onwards when preparations for closure were accelerated to ensure the mine’s formal transition into aftercare in June this year.

The mine began the closure process with phases two to seven in 2012, while still in production. Phase one took place while the mine was operational in the early 2000s. All production ceased in December 2015, and the rehabilitation works were considered to have been completed in February 2018.

Although the mine ceased operations in December 2015 and had started with a progressive rehabilitation process, it was a further five years before the EPA approved the successful execution of the mine closure plan.

The notice of completion from the EPA was also achieved following enormous effort from all Lisheen employees and their business partners.

Best practice

Many aspects of closure planning and implementation at Lisheen may be considered best practice for the industry. Therefore, it is anticipated that the mine will be seen as an example of successfully operating and closing a mine.

Vedanta has adopted a biodiversity policy and management standard that is in line with international standards and the guidelines of the International Finance Corporation (IFC). This is an integral part of their commitment to sustainable development.

“Protecting and nurturing the environment is built into our business strategy and philosophy at Vedanta. Our products and processes have sustainability at their core, across all our operations, and the rehabilitation at Lisheen mine is proof of this,” says Singla.

“Biodiversity management has been made integral in all our projects across all three stages – the design phase, the operational phase and the post-closure phase,” he adds.

In South Africa VZL operates Black Mountain Mining’s (BMM) Gamberg open pit situated in the Northern Cape. Over 80,000 plants and 360,000 seeds have been collected and moved to the specialised facilities of the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden. “The objective is that, once mining has ended and the area’s surface is restored, it can be replanted with the endemic species that were removed from the site, saved and protected,” says Singla.

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