

## Road extends life of Leeuwpan mine

A new road has extended the life of Exxaro's Leeuwpan Coal Mine situated near Delmas, Mpumalanga, by providing access to further coal reserves.



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“Leeuwpan needed to develop an area where it could mine another 5.1-million tons per annum (Mtpa) to extend its life by a further 10 years,” says Mervin Govender, Exxaro group projects manager.

A national road – the R50 – ran over the identified area and another private access road, the Thaba Chueu Mine (TCM) road servicing the nearby silica mine, was also affected. Both roads needed to be redirected in parts for Leeuwpan to reach the new mining area.

It was a race against time. “A project like this would normally take 14 months, but Exxaro needed it completed in eight months to avoid the mine closing in 2019,” says Govender.

The R50 and TCM roads were handed over to Exxaro at the end of August and opened to the public on 28 September.

“The successful completion of the construction of the R50 deviation and new TCM access road now opens up the OI block for mining and extending the life of Leeuwpan Coal Mine, resulting in significant investment and economic growth for the Delmas area,” says Nombasa Tsengwa, Exxaro executive head, coal operations.

## Project success

The Delmas community was included in the project from the beginning. A dedicated stakeholder manager was included on the project team, who discussed the employment and procurement opportunities available to the community, thereby allowing them to buy into the project before it took its first steps.

“It is important that our host communities are included and experience the benefits of Exxaro’s operations,” says Mangaliso Sethethi, business unit manager.

At peak, 343 people were employed, with 70% recruited locally. To date, direct capital spend from the life extension project (lifex) amounted to R280m (box-cut and road diversions), with 31% spent in the Delmas community . Further benefits will accrue in the next stage of the project, which includes building homes for residents who have been relocated.

Skills transfer, and training were a valuable by-product of the project investment as local labourers who worked on the road received certification to enhance future employment opportunities. However, the reach of lifex was broadened beyond construction when Exxaro built a training facility in Delmas for young people to reduce their dependency on the mine and find employment outside of the mining industry. The project gave learnership opportunities to 55 local youth. These youth are given a subsidy of R2,000 a month as well as one meal a day while they study basic IT skills.

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