

Botswana minister visits Kihabe

It is not often that one hears of countries' mining ministers going bush to visit advanced exploration projects – and if this happens in Africa, it could only be in Botswana.

Botswana's Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs Minister Dr Ponatshego Kedikilwe recently took time off to visit a base metals exploration project run by Perth-based Mt Burgess Mining NL.

Kedikilwe, accompanied by officials from his department, visited the Kihabe zinc-lead-silver project in the country's north-west. During the site visit, the Minister was briefed on the processes required to be fulfilled by the company to progress towards a BFS.

Managing director Nigel Forrester said that other major issues addressed included "the provision of sufficient power to site and the upgrade of site access".

In a letter to Forrester after the visit, Kedikilwe said he was encouraged by Mt Burgess' commitment to the project.

"The Government has an interest in the success of the project as the start of production would mean job creation and poverty reduction. The potential development instils considerable confidence in the future of mining in Botswana," the Minister said.

"The Government is committed to doing what can possibly be done and using our best endeavours to facilitate progress through the creation of an enabling environment.

"The projects are a good omen for the country's prosperity and economic diversification. I am grateful that they bring prospects for technology and skills transfer, which Botswana needs."

Meanwhile, Mt Burgess has received a report on the mineralogical test work done on the Nxuu deposit, 7km east of its Kihabe deposit in Western Ngamiland

Mt Burgess said the report confirmed that the zinc mineralisation at the Nxuu deposit was primarily hosted within smithsonite, which has previously been confirmed within the Kihabe deposit as being amenable to acid leaching followed by electro-winning of zinc metal.

"This being the case, it is estimated that some 50% of the company's combined resources at both the Kihabe and Nxuu deposits should now be able to produce zinc metal on site through electro-winning for the first five



Botswana's Mines Minister Dr Ponatshego Kedikilwe, right, visited Mt Burgess Mining's Kihabe base metals project in Ngamiland during January. With him was Jacob Thamage, who is Botswana's deputy permanent secretary in the mines department

years of production," the company said.

"During this period this will eliminate the need to produce concentrates, the need to transport concentrates and the need to pay smelting costs, thereby increasing project profit margins. Accordingly, the capital cost of a flotation circuit may not need to be addressed in the initial years of production.

"Also with the need for a smaller flotation circuit to that previously estimated, the overall project capital cost should be reduced."

The combined open cut resources at both

Kihabe and Nxuu, applying a 0.5% external cut-off, now stand at 29.9mt @ 2.62% zinc-equivalent.

"Based on the premise of a revised scoping study covering a proposed 10-year mine life at a potential mining rate of 2.5 mtpa, a selection of external percentage cut-offs can be used for both the Kihabe and Nxuu resources to best suit such a regime."

– Barry Avery