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HEAVY LIFTS ON DE HOOP DAM PROJECT

The Department of Water Affairs & Environmental Affairs (DWEA) is currently using a Potain MD485 M20 tower crane from local distributor SA French on its De Hoop Dam project near Steelpoort in Limpopo.

"We delivered the crane to site last year but due to logistical issues on site, the crane was only commissioned in May 2009," Quentin van Breda, managing director of Alt-X-listed SA French, says.

At the time of its delivery in early 2008, the crane had the largest lifting capacity in South Africa. "This has since been superseded by the 40 ton capacity Potain MD 1100 which we delivered to Eskom's Medupi project for Kentz Constructors early in 2009," van Breda explains.

The DWEA has a long history of using Potain cranes. "We bought our first Potain in the 1970's from the local agent at that time, Triplejay, and when SA French was formed and took over the agency our relationship continued. We now own six Potain cranes, most of them considered to be large capacity units," John Baker, Acting Director of Construction at DWEA, says.

Van Breda explains that a long standing relationship with DWEA does not necessarily guarantee a contract award. "We tendered for the project along with other well known suppliers and our crane was deemed the most suitable for the project from the list of remaining successful tenderers. Crucial to success was the ability to provide a specific freestanding height and capacity for the mechanical lifts that would be required."

The De Hoop Dam, which is being built by DWEA's own construction division, is a roller compacted concrete (Rollcrete or RCC) structure while the various structures around the dam are constructed with standard concrete and reinforcing steel. "The dam lends itself to the mass production nature of Rollcrete and entails delivering the concrete to site in trucks or on conveyors where it is spread by a bulldozer then compacted with a vibratory roller. We will be pouring approximately 975 000 m³ of concrete in this manner," Baker adds.

The new crane is currently sited to lift the piping into place and will move to its final position at the outlet works in September, where it will remain until December 2011. "We have currently commissioned the crane with a 80 metre jib, although the critical radius of 17.3 metres with 20 ton lifting capacity is currently required. Once the crane moves into its final position, it will be re-erected with a 60 metre jib with a critical lift capacity of 6.9 tons. The crane has a maximum jib length of 80 metres with a lifting capacity of 31 ton at that reach," van Breda says.

The Potain MD485 is a very modern, full specification crane with sophisticated hoist, slew and trolley mechanism, making it a very efficient crane. "However, the selling points for the DWEA were the crane's capacity, speed and freestanding height," van Breda says.

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