



Precast concrete manufacturer Colossal Concrete Products reopened its De Aar manufacturing plant, in the Northern Cape, in September following the conclusion of a one-year contract with State-owned Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) to supply precast concrete railway sleepers for the parastatal's national freight rail network upgrade.

The De Aar facility is strategically located in the Northern Cape, near one of the arterial railway junctions connecting the lines from Cape Town, in the Western Cape, Johannesburg, in Gauteng, and Kimberley in the Northern Cape, say Colossal Concrete Products CEO and chairperson **Gwen Mahuma-Madida** and sales director **Chris Klagsbrun**.

Reopening the factory will enable the company to have the capacity to produce over one-million railway sleepers a year, thereby creating more opportunities for employment, and increasing additional upstream and downstream manufacturing and supply.

Providing railway sleepers for TFR will also increase and improve pan-African transportation, infrastructure and economies.

Mahuma-Madida and Klagsbrun add that the mothballing of the De Aar plant by its pre-

vious owners, who served the construction sector in the Northern Cape, created a "void", thereby causing construction companies to order precast products from other provinces such as Gauteng.

In line with its precast concrete manufacturing capacity, skills and pan-African growth strategy, they assure that the company can play a significant part in the roll-out of rail, civil and general infrastructure development.

"Africa is rich in natural resources, but much-needed growth and progress are often hampered by lack of finance and the required infrastructure. Colossal Concrete Products understands the pivotal importance of infrastructure development and the impact that this has on the economic development of any country."

Railway Revival

Mahuma-Madida and Klagsbrun note that South Africa is at a "pivotal crossroads" in terms of the status of its rail network.

"While we are encouraged by the recent governmental White Paper on plans to revive the railways, we do believe this is a task for not only the public sector, but also the manufacturing and mining sectors that are key freight rail users.

"We all need to roll up our sleeves and contribute to this much-needed rejuvenation of the rail network for the benefit and betterment of the entire economy," they say.

To this end, the De Aar plant will supply precast concrete products to neighbouring countries, such as Namibia and Botswana, depending on weight and volume.

Depending on future market and business development opportunities, Mahuma-Madida and Klagsbrun note that the company may consider establishing project factories in these neighbouring countries.

The team at Colossal Concrete Products

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has, in the past, established project factories in countries such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia and has production equipment and moulds available to produce concrete sleepers for both Cape and standard-gauge sleepers and other infrastructure products, such as pipes, culverts, poles and masts. Hence, the company aims to use rail as a base to expand into adjacent countries and eventually introduce other products to various markets.

“It is very important to be a pan-African player as well as a South African player. Although South Africa still has some way to go, that is where a lot of the infrastructure development stems from, and we really need to be part of that,” they explain.

Additionally, the De Aar plant will manufacture a wide variety of products for civil engineering and construction, including precast concrete pipes, kerbs and culverts.

Moving Forward

Colossal Concrete Products plans to start manufacturing wind turbine towers for the wind energy and wind farm sectors.

As such, Mahuma-Madida and Klagsbrun



CULVERTS

The De Aar plant will be manufacturing a wide variety of products which will be used in civil engineering and construction, including precast concrete pipes, poles, masts and culverts

note that the company has an active product and research and development division, which is focused on developing new and innovative precast concrete products and solutions for key target sectors, including rail, renewable energy, civil engineering and construction.

In line with plans to replicate what Colossal does across Africa, the concrete manufacturer is working with its Swedish partner on pan-African rail projects to potentially oversee con-

struction or conclude service level agreements to manage new facilities.

The company aims to continue marketing its products to the civil engineering and construction sector.

“We are committed to the future of rail and infrastructure development in South Africa and the rest of Africa. We are proud to play our part in moving this forward,” they conclude. 

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