

Media release: Immediate

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The Oaks Mine in a 'show case' closure

After almost a decade of conducting mining operations at The Oaks Mine in Limpopo Province the payable ore has been depleted and the mine has closed. The closure comes four years later than originally expected and has been carried out in a planned manner, beginning when the mine began operations in 1998. The smallest of De Beers Consolidated Mines (DBCM) operations ceased mining earlier this year, and the remaining stockpiles have since been processed and treated before the operation closed earlier this week. The mine produced 94 000 carats of the 15 million carats produced by DBCM in 2007.

The final closure of The Oaks Mine took place on Tuesday, 5 August 2008. The Premier of Limpopo, the honourable Sello Moloto, and Ga Seleka, Ga Kibi, Ga Maleboho and Babirwa traditional leaders, and a senior representative of the NUM joined the DBCM managing director David Noko, and members of the Board of Directors and The Oaks employees in a closure ceremony held at the mine.

Managing director, David Noko stated: "The mine was operated as a smaller scale operation with an expected life of six years. I am happy to say that we managed to operate it for 10 years. I'm also particularly proud that the employees of The Oaks achieved the distinction of holding the company safety record on so many occasions, three times in a row, that we have had to rewrite the safety record books because of their achievements. We believe that this mine holds a record in its class of being the safest mine in the world." Turning to safety as the key mining priority David Noko continued; "I am really proud that in De Beers our employees can boast that they have made an underground mine, Finsch, and now also an open cast mine, The Oaks, the world's record holders as the safest operations! The mine also holds the ISO 14001 and OSHAS 18001 certification. On the important environmental front; from the very first day of operation the management undertook concurrent rehabilitation while mining. The reality is sad when a mine closes following the completion of the mining of its economic resource; however it is also a special moment to reflect on how such a reality can leave behind a positive legacy. The De Beers Oaks employees have done a great job planning for this day, involving as they have for years, the communities which inevitably are affected by change. Together we have attempted to shape a new future out of the positive impacts of this decade of mining activity."

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The decision to go ahead with closure follows extensive evaluation of the deposit, which when it ceased production was a hectare in size and 120 meters in depth. The decision to close took place in consultation with employees and their representatives, as well as with the local communities. Alternative employment, and other measures to create opportunities for employees to remain economically active beyond the mine's closure have been explored. At the end of July, 38 of the 56 permanent employees had been successfully redeployed to other DBCM operations. The company is continuing its efforts in assisting employees seeking employment. The Mine has formed a partnership with the Department of Labour to re-skill employees so additional skills may be acquired to enhance employees' employment prospects in other sectors. Relationships with other mining companies are also expected to yield further opportunities. "Our commitment is to promote the employability of all our employees and we are confident that the skills base in this region is now better in the community than when we started working here in 1998," stated Jeffrey Mulabisana, the mines operations manager in his speech to the employees and community and government leaders present.

De Beers takes cognizance of the need for economic sustainability; therefore, whilst the company has confirmed the closure of the mine, De Beers seeks ways to lessen the impact on individuals and local communities of a mining resource coming to an end. The company continues to demonstrate one of its values, "Show We Care", by continuing with the commitments already made in Corporate Social Investment (CSI) in the area.

This can be seen by the support to many organisations, including the Soul City HIV/AIDS initiative, several education programmes, sponsoring a bus to Boithuto Primary School in partnership with the Regional Department of Education, the Grassroots Soccer programme and associated educational programmes, an early learning centre in Ga-Seleka village, assisting women in the small mining initiative at the Babirwa Tribal Authority in Steilop, as well as sponsoring the Swartwater Police Station with a Vodacom Digital Phone. All such projects form a part of an extensive De Beers CSI programme which addresses social issues in the mining communities within which De Beers operate.

The property is currently being considered for use in ecotourism and agriculture and a review of the proposals received is underway.

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For further information and photographs please contact

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