



Empa Structures impresses!

(Above left) Lifting the deck beams at the Bosmansdam Pedestrian Bridge project, (Above right) Franskraal waste water treatment works

Last year, Empa Structures clinched a Fulton Award for its involvement in the Bosmansdam road pedestrian bridge, and today boasts substantial new contracts, cementing its place in the civil engineering industry. The company was established in 2000 as a result of a management buy-out of the structures operating arm of an established civil contractor in Cape Town. All the existing staff were absorbed into the new entity, forming a strong and experienced workforce.

Full name: Cameron Bain

Education: PR Tech Eng

Position: MD of Empa Structures

Main activity of the company: Civil engineering contractors

Who are the other members at Empa Structures: Gareth Stander, Garth Petersen, Jose Dos Reis (B Tech Civil)

CIDB rating: 7 CE/PE

How has the company evolved over the years? What have been some of its most important milestones to date: As trading opportunities improved, we made the decision to remain a structural concrete contracting business

concentrating more on aspects such as improving earthworks and concrete-handling capacity in order to service our own sites, rather than entering other portions of the civil market. In addition to this, we have also experienced growth in our turnkey operation, which has grown out of a need to satisfy clients in this regard. We currently have two registered ECSA professionals managing this operation.

What main markets/customers does the company service: We operate mainly in the state and municipal markets but have recently become more involved with clients in the private sector. We view this as a significant future growth area.

What significant projects have you been involved with to date: We have been involved in many interesting projects, but one that stands out is the Bosmansdam road pedestrian bridge, for which we won a Fulton Award in 2007.

For this project, we precast the bridge beams in the road median and tandem lifted them into position using two mobile cranes of 275 t capacity. We made use of purpose-made lifting cradles and, with the Cape's infamous south easter wind, placing was quite a challenge.

Anything else in the pipeline: We have just been awarded the Bottelary road bridge widening over both the R300 and Kuilsrivier. Also awarded this month is the repair of eight flood damaged structures in George and a 12 ML reservoir



for the City of Cape Town. We have also recently started work with the Viscas Corporation and Eskom on the Hydra Gamma 765 kV power line in Richmond.

With regard to the Hydra Gamma 765 kV power line, what is the value of this contract: As the main contractor is supplying a major portion of the materials the value of our scope of work on this contract is approximately R8 million.

What is the scope of the contract: Empa Structures is working as a sub-contractor to the Viscas Corporation. The scope of our involvement includes construction of 30 km of powerline foundations (approximately 700 individual bases). These vary between grouted rock anchor type (expected total of 6000 m), and conventional bases with plinths and bolt sets.

When did work commence: June 2008

When is the expected completion date: December 2008

Do you foresee any challenges: Logistics is the biggest challenge that we are facing as the terrain is very rough.

How has the government's infrastructural spend impacted on your business? Has the slump on the building side had any impact: We have definitely benefited from the increased infrastructural spend of government especially in the construction of new water and wastewater treatment plants.

We do not operate in the domestic building market so this downturn has had no influence on our operations.

What are your biggest opportunities and challenges at present: In the current market, everyone wants to increase their slice of the pie, but skills shortages seem to be a major stumbling block for every contractor.

So, although there are many opportunities, having the necessary available human resources is a huge challenge. to page 20

Empa
STRUCTURES CC

"Winner of a Fulton award"


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Handing over the Golf Course sub-station in Stellenbosch is Gareth Stander, Des May and Cameron Bain



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What is your view of the short-term future and beyond 2010?

Do you foresee sustainable growth?

By all accounts, infrastructure spending is here to stay for a while beyond 2010 and, if one takes into account Eskom's programme, then we think 2015 is a fair guess. Taking all this into account, if government can keep the big boys busy, we should have excellent growth opportunities in our segment of the market.

Is skills development and training a cause for concern?

Skills shortages are hurting us especially at supervisory level. Semi skilled workers can be trained in relatively short periods for specific tasks, but the lack of old school artisans who have come up through the ranks and are operating at supervisory level is a problem.

In terms of fleet and equipment, do you use one OEM or a range of suppliers? How often do you update your fleet? We try to standardise our equipment and not jump around too much. Replacement of equipment is done on an as required basis, but we have found it to be much more cost-effective to replace vehicles at the end of their finance periods and not try to squeeze that extra mileage out of them.

What gives your company its leading edge in what is a highly competitive market? We put much effort into building structures that will meet the quality and durability expectations of the designer. We pride ourselves on our quality, and this is the cornerstone on which our business is built. ■

Background of the 765 kV Hydra Gamma power line

In December 2005, Eskom received a record of decision for the construction of a 765 kV transmission power line between the existing Hydra Substation and the proposed new Gamma Sub-station, approximately 130 km in length.

Since then, there has been continued high growth in electricity demand in the Western and Eastern Cape.

Eskom has established that there is a need for an additional 765 kV transmission powerline from Hydra to Gamma Sub-stations, with an extension of Hydra Sub-station.

This proposed project includes:

- Extension of the existing 765 kV Hydra Sub-station, on Eskom owned land, and
- Construction of an additional 765 kV transmission powerline between the extended Hydra Sub-station to Gamma Substation, Northern Cape.