**NEWS ARTICLE**

Corobrik allays concerns about planned coal removal at Rietvlei

**26 March 2****024:** “We are not in the coal-mining business and have no intention to do so,” comments **Nick Booth**, CEO of leading brick manufacturer [Corobrik](http://www.corobrik.co.za). The company operates an open-cast clay brick production facility adjacent to the ecologically sensitive Rietvlei Nature Reserve in Centurion.

Recent media speculation focused on Corobrik’s alleged plan, and subsequent granting of a mining licence by the Department of Minerals and Energy (DMRE), to mine above-ground coal from untapped surface deposits at its Rietvlei operation.

While Corobrik’s existing mining right applies only to clay, the DMRE has requested the brickmaker to submit a retroactive application in terms of its proposed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A public participation meeting was held on 8 September at the Pretoria Yacht Club, Rietvlei Dam to address all stakeholder concerns.

Booth, who was present at the official opening of Corobrik’s clay quarry in 1983, points out that the brickmaker has had a mining licence as required by law since the 1980s. “That is perfectly normal for any kind of surface mining operation, even if it is just clay. The mining licence is not an issue at all.”

Any kind of authorised mining activity also requires an environmental management plan to address issues such as dust control and water monitoring. Additional requirements are rehabilitation measures and a water licence.

Booth explains that Rietvlei is a traditional open-cast clay mining setup used by all brickmakers. “It is a really straightforward operation.” The strict environmental and sustainability measures maintained by Corobrik at Rietvlei form part of its corporate Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) measures.

“We knew there was coal in the quarry, as we are constantly measuring our clay reserves and constantly planning the next segment of our clay-mining operation,” highlights Booth. Drilling ahead of the face to obtain an exact understanding of where the clay deposits were situated resulted in the discovery of coal.

“What you do not always pick up from a drilling programme is the quantity or the thickness of the different layers of material such as clay and coal. Only when you actually start to work the face backwards do you begin to see the delimitations of each material layer,” adds Booth.

Corobrik has consistently mined three different types of clay at Rietvlei, to the point where the presence of a coal overburden has now become a factor in terms of its thickness. Corobrik applied to the DMRE as early as 2022 to obtain a licence to mine the coal so as to remove it and secure ongoing access to the clay reserves present.

“Our commercial consideration is that the coal is now overlying the carbonaceous clay deposits we need to utilise for our brickmaking operation at Rietvlei,” says Booth. In fact, the clay layer is sandwiched between two coal layers at the time, which has necessitated coal being stockpiled at the quarry in the meantime.

The DMRE subsequently requested Corobrik to apply officially for a coal mining licence to mine the coal and have it removed. “We would not have been allowed to sell the coal obviously, for then we would have been coal miners, which we are not,” asserts Booth.

It is vital to remove the coal stockpile due to the environmental risk from contamination and the potential for spontaneous combustion if the stockpile becomes too big. “It is a complex issue,” notes Booth. He points out that there are already coal-mining operations on the same watercourse in the Rietvlei area.

“We have no long-term plan around the coal. It is really a case of removing what is in our way so we can mine the clay to our best advantage in terms of running the brick factory. The coal is actually an obstacle at this point,” says Booth.

A contractor will be appointed to mine the coal overburden and ensure its proper removal and disposal. “The other factor that needs to be taken into consideration is that while out coal estimates are only within seven years, we will be mining clay for the next 35 years. This means that our Rietvlei factory will continue to be a viable clay brick making factory until at least 2050,” concludes Booth.

***Ends***

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**Notes to the editor**

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**About Corobrik**From small beginnings in 1902, Corobrik has evolved into South Africa’s leading clay brick and paving manufacturer. Corobrik’s product quality and performance attributes remain key to the company’s success.

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