

Metix nearly complete on its biggest ever LSTK contract



The Burgersfort site photographed in May showing the main sinter building and pellet handling section (photo: Metix).

Leading smelter and sinter specialist Metix says it is proud of its involvement with Sino-steel's Project Sunrise at ASA Metals' ferro-chrome plant near Burgersfort.

"As our first ASA Metals project, the opportunities are exciting," says Metix Engineering Director Andrew van Niekerk. "It is also our largest lump sum turnkey (LSTK) project ever, which has proven challenging in recent market conditions."

The project includes the engineering and construction of a 600 kt/a pelletising and sinter plant, from conceptual design to final handover to ASA Metals. It is similar in scope to three other 600 kt/a sinter plants that Metix has built for clients such as Xstrata and Samancor Chrome.

"This plant is important for ASA Metals' environmentally sound closed furnaces, as it allows the use of chromite fines or concentrates without adverse effects," says van Niekerk. "South African mined chromite concentrate recoveries are much higher than lumpy ore, and the safe utilisation of these fines is key. It balances the use of mined ore, increases the profit margin due to the export of value added product, improves recoveries in smelting and contributes to operational stability."

The Metix team has been involved in the design, construction and operation of nine out of 11 of these plants in South Africa over the last ten years.

"We began the ASA Metals project at the end of October 2007, with a Ready-for-Hot-Commissioning (RHC) target set towards the end of the second quarter of 2009. With some 543 construction personnel currently active on site, we have increased our construction management team to over 20 to ensure that we reach our target date," says van Niekerk.

Construction is complete in most of the plant areas and cold commissioning is currently being undertaken. The arrival of the ball mill shell at the end of April saw Metix staff working swiftly to get the structure erected. "The ball mill ensures that the proportioned mix that feeds the pelletising and sinter furnace has the correct particle size distribution," van Niekerk explains. The gearbox for the drive was also recently delivered, and the final drive installed and carefully aligned. ■