

# A matter of trust for Richards Bay Minerals

## RBM and host communities agree to trust deed amendments

**Dave Savides**

AFTER the attempt to amend aspects of its community development and public benefit trust deeds was dismissed by the Pietermaritzburg High Court in April, Richards Bay Minerals (RBM) on Thursday announced an amicable agreement with its Dube, Mkhwanazi and Mbonambi host communities.

This after the mine had in November 2022 asked the High Court to allow it to amend aspects of trust deeds pertaining to its four host communities.

In the interim, an agreement was reached with the Sokhulu community in 2024.

Thursday's statement said consensus had been reached over 'certain amendments' to the respective community development and public benefit trust deeds.

The changes are intended to bring the trust deeds into alignment with applicable legislation, industry best practices aimed at improving trust governance, regular reporting, and greater transparency on how broad-based community benefits will be achieved through trust activities.

The revised trust deeds have been filed with the Master of the High Court for registration.

Chairperson of the Host Communities Task Team, Martin Mbuyazi, said on behalf of the communities, "Reaching this important

milestone paves the way for resetting the relationship between RBM and our communities.

"We remain hopeful that all that has been agreed will be fully implemented, leading to the resumption of trust activities for the benefit of the broader community."

Rio Tinto Iron and Titanium (RTIT) Africa Operations managing director Werner Duvenhage said, "This agreement represents a significant milestone for all the parties involved, and it would not have been possible without open and meaningful dialogue.

"It demonstrates what we can achieve by working together. I look forward to a renewed relationship, and extend my thanks to the Dube, Mkhwanazi and Mbonambi trustees, amaKhosi, as well as members of the traditional council for their leadership and commitment."

### Ongoing dialogue

RBM and host community representatives will continue discussions on the implementation of the changes and the operationalisation of the revised trusts - an essential condition for resolution of the existing trust reform litigation - and the resumption of economic benefits for public activities in the communities.

The parties will also continue to discuss broad-based participation and opportunities for empowerment of the community.

Additionally, RBM will work with amaKhosi to arrange community imbizos to discuss this and other matters.

RBM annually contributes over R1.4-billion in taxes and royalties to the fiscus, providing work for approximately 5 000 employees and contractors, almost the majority of whom live in the operation's host communities.

It has focused on development opportunities for women and youth, among others, funding programmes in support of education and skills training which directly benefit the communities.

While the trust announcement is not directly

linked to RBM's plans to mine the Zulti South area, the ZO was told that 'Zulti South remains crucial to ensuring an extension of RBM's life of mine, and we continue seeking better ways to execute the project, which has not yet received full approval'.

Zulti South was first mooted more than a decade ago, and in June 2017, the City of uMhlathuze confirmed it had granted RBM servitude rights over properties stretching 20km along the coast near eSikhaleni, in an area referred to as 'the best undeveloped land in the world' in terms of its potential to deliver heavy minerals.



Dave Savides

Improved community relationships auger well for RBM's future in mining

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## Port pollution problem

### Response

However, Richards Bay Clean Air Association public officer Sandy Camminga says a reduction in formal air quality complaints is no indication of better performance.

"While any reduction of air pollution would be welcomed, the fact of the matter is that there has been no improvement in coal dust impacts on the community.

"This is evidenced by the ongoing social media comments and photographic evidence submitted to the RBCAA. Residents have given up logging complaints because no corrective action is taken," said Camminga.

"Mere statistics are no measure of the significant impacts coal dust is having on the environment, homes, businesses, and, most importantly, the health of residents."

### Zululanders share how the coal dust issue has affected them:

"Clearly, no one is taking the environmental contamination and dirty air seriously. Not only vegetation, but cars, roofs, wipers and air cons. Everything is affected"

- Frederick de Coning



"Roofs, paving, lungs... Everything is coated in dust"

- Imtiaz Mobeen



"I don't think this will end anytime soon. Since Transnet was deliberately sabotaged, the trucking industry has created a lot of new millionaires in Mpumalanga and KZN. Even if Transnet could outsource its railway service to private companies, they won't win this war because many people are making real money with these trucks. The best solution is to create new cities and accept that Richards Bay is an industrial city"

- Muzi Cebo Nkomonde

"And we have red eyes owing to the dust and chemicals"

- Mfanozi Zwelethu



"Everything is covered in this black dust"

- Neil Chetty

"We might as well be called Witbank 2 - black dust everywhere. Let's also chat about all the damage of these coal trucks (our roads, traffic hold-up and, sadly, terrible accidents)"

- Marinda Kellie



"It is an endless fight trying to keep our homes clean. Having to keep doors closed when the wind blows. Poor plants are covered in black dust. Just look at the vegetation along the road between Meerensee and Arboretum; it's black. I never had sinus problems before, now I need to take antihistamines regularly"

- Theresa Muller



"Here in our rural area, we are continually suffering from dust from gravel roads. If you can also consider us here in your complaint"

- Mhlengeni Dlodla



Picking tomatoes in his garden, Arboretum resident Frederick de Coning's hands, and even the tomatoes, are covered in coal

"It's heart-breaking to realise that profits are being placed above people. Our town deserves better - and so do we"

- Nadine du Preez



"Respiratory disorders are a daily issue among residents"

- Bobby Greenhash

"What are the rights and recourse for ratepayers to claim for added household expenses and health issues from the coal depot businesses and trucking companies?"

- Ted Burns

"It's causing major chest infections"

- Ashnee Chetty

### TOURISM FILM

KwaZulu-Natal is rising. The province is riding a wave of momentum, with tourist arrivals climbing sharply and King Shaka International Airport recording a staggering 270% increase in passengers in July.



Major investments are already reshaping the landscape - from Southern Sun's R1-billion beachfront hotel upgrades to the Richards Bay International Conference Centre, Club Med's North Coast resort, and new cultural and eco-tourism lodges. Heritage projects such as the Reed Dance Documentary and the King Cetshwayo Monument will further showcase the province's living culture.



KwaZulu-Natal is proving that tourism can create jobs, empower small businesses, and inspire global confidence - all while protecting heritage and the environment.

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