

NICO PIENAAR, DIRECTOR of Aspasa, says planning needs to be done in conjunction with all role players, so that materials – such as sand and aggregates – are available where required. Depending on the grade and type of aggregate, required materials may need to be sourced from different areas, which might complicate or drive up the prices of projects.

“Sand and aggregates in concrete, bitumen, or as bedding material are the building blocks of almost all our infrastructure, whether it be road, railways, buildings, or pipelines. Yet, few people realise how different the requirements are for each and every application.

Avoiding last-minute plans

“Different infrastructure requires different characteristics and properties of these materials. As a result, it is prudent to find out where the nearest sources are, what reserves are available, and what transport implications exist. It is also vital to secure supply and pricing at a predetermined rate.

“Some unsustainable possibilities exist: the ideal material that is eventually sourced may either need to be transported over long distances; contractors may be tempted to use unsuitable material from make-shift excavations; or contractors may source materials from illegal suppliers who may be practicing unsustainable quarrying to the detriment of workers, surrounding communities, as well as the environment.

“Last-minute planning has been responsible for badly thought-out borrow pits along our roads and railways in the past, and these are still visible along our freeways where they have been left to scar the landscape forever. Borrow pits also jeopardise the sustainable employment of those in the quarrying industry, as they take away from surrounding quarries and make them less viable in the short term. In tough economic times, this may be all that is required to close down marginal local quarries,” says Pienaar.

Working together

He explains that, by working with all the relevant industries, plans can be made in each industry to bolster supply to meet demands. Where local supplies may be an issue, the industry may even be able to work together to stockpile materials or source new and sustainable sources closer to where they are required.

This will also prevent collusion, as all possible suppliers can be identified and terms, conditions, and pricing obtained beforehand to ensure fairness. “We want to ensure that government’s projects are successful and benefit the population. In addition, we want to ensure that our industry is ready and also stands to benefits from government’s bold plans,” Pienaar concludes. **35**

Gearing up for multibillion-rand projects

As government gears up to spend R813 billion on infrastructure development over the next three years, the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (Aspasa) is cautioning role players to begin consulting with building material suppliers in order to ensure availability and quality.



Nico Pienaar,
Aspasa director

Formal quarrying operations provide sustainable employment for thousands of workers around the country

