

Progress Update: Polihali Transfer Tunnel – Second TBM Steps In



Exciting progress continues under Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), with the second Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) now preparing to advance on the Polihali Transfer Tunnel from the Polihali side toward Katse.

The main body of the TBM, which was assembled at the access adit portal, “stepped in” to the adit last weekend, 1 November 2025. Over the next three weeks, it will move toward the TBM assembly chamber along the transfer tunnel — marking a significant milestone for the project.

Once fully operational, the TBM will progress at an estimated rate of 100 metres per day, supported by 31 backup gantries. The official launch of the TBM is scheduled for February 2026.

Measuring 305 metres in length and 5.35 metres in diameter, this highly specialised machine is a feat of modern engineering and a symbol of LHDA’s commitment to technical excellence. Its successful assembly, which began on 15 September 2025 following its arrival in Lesotho in July, reflects the precision and collaboration driving the LHWP forward.

The two TBMs — one at Katse and one at Polihali — will each excavate approximately 17 kilometres of the 38-kilometre-long transfer tunnel, which will ultimately convey water from the Polihali Dam to the Katse Reservoir.

This milestone underscores LHDA’s ongoing dedication to ensuring the successful and timely implementation of Phase II, strengthening Lesotho’s reputation as a regional leader in engineering innovation, water security, and sustainable development.