



Lesotho Highlands Development Authority

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LHWP TUNNELS OUTAGE – OCTOBER 2024

Maseru, January 2024 – The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) today announced the upcoming planned maintenance of the Phase I Water Transfer and Delivery Tunnels. This will result in the in the total shutdown of the water delivery system for six months. During this time, LHDA states that there will be no **transfer** of water from Katse to ‘Muela (**Transfer Tunnel – 45km**), which will result in no generation of electricity at the ‘Muela Hydropower Station (MHP). Also, there will be no **delivery** of water from Lesotho to South Africa through the **Delivery Tunnel – 37km (Delivery Tunnel South 15km and Delivery Tunnel North 22km)**.

One of the purposes of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) is to enhance the use of Senqu River by storing, diverting, and controlling the flow of Senqu River and its affluents to effect **delivery of specified quantities** of water to a Designated Point in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and by **utilizing such delivery system to generate** hydro-electricity power in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

As part of the planned maintenance of the key components of the water delivery system, the **Transfer Tunnel** (From Katse to ‘Muela) and **Delivery Tunnel** (From ‘Muela to Ash River Outfall in RSA), the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) will stop the delivery of water to the Republic of South Africa and the generation of hydro-electric power for Lesotho for a period of six (6) months, starting from 01 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. As per the provisions of the LHWP Treaty, the LHDA is responsible for the Transfer Tunnel and Delivery Tunnel South, which are situated within the Border of Lesotho and TCTA is responsible for the Deliver Tunnel North, which starts from the Caledon River to the Arsh River Outfall.

Speaking at the Press Conference held in Maseru today, LHDA’s Chief Executive, Tente Tente, announced that in September to November 2019, during the inspections of the Transfer and Deliver Tunnels, it was established that the painting on all sections of the tunnels that are **steel lined** was wearing off and if left for too long, there was a risk that steel lining would corrode. The specialists advised that the tunnel could safely be operated for a period of **around five (5) years** (Say October 2019 to October 2024). Safe operation of the system significantly beyond the 5 years could not be guaranteed.

The Chief Executive added that LHDA plans to use the opportunity created by the 2024 Tunnels Outage to undertake other routine maintenance on the 'Muela Hydropower Station and other related components. This will include but is not limited to the replacement of the process's controllers of the MHP Unit 1. The station houses three Units that generate hydropower. The 10-year(s) inspection and refurbishment of Units 1 and 3, have recently been completed. The 10-year(s) inspection and refurbishment of Unit 2 and process's controllers is planned for February to May 2024.

LHDA will undertake extensive maintenance and repair works in the tunnels. "This will require a complete shutdown of the station to empty the tunnels of any water and make way for maintenance teams to enter the tunnels and carry out the repair work. It is a sensitive, and extensive job that is done with the highest degree of safety considerations and care, and thus requires thorough planning, execution, and post maintenance inspections before water is released back into the tunnels." He stated.

Reentseng Molapo, LHDA's Divisional Manager for Development & Operations, oversees the operations and maintenance of LHDA's infrastructure. He indicated that, "The maintenance and repair work is expected to last about four months in total, whilst preparations which include emptying of the tunnels will occupy the first month, and final inspections and refilling the tunnels with water will take up the final month, making the total outage period to be six months."

Tente further added that, "Engagements with relevant stakeholders, for example LEC to make arrangements for alternative electricity supply are ongoing and we have engaged thoroughly with the government on preparation for that eventuality. Hence, the recent announcement by the Minister of Energy, Hon. Nqosa Mahao, MP. There have been ongoing coordination with TCTA to ensure that they are also ready to their part on the Deliver Tunnel North. Furthermore, he stated that the LHDA will mitigate the risk of loss of Royalties Revenue by delivering more water before and after the outage. However, the same is not possible for electricity."

The LHDA says it has prepared a 9 months long communications effort to ensure that Basotho and all key stakeholders remain informed of the progress leading up to, during and after the outage to ensure that sufficient information is available, and the impact to the day-to-day lives of people is minimized.

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About:

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) is multi-billion Maloti/Rand bi-national Project between the Governments of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa.

It comprises water transfer and hydropower generation and ancillary developments. The water transfer component entails the construction of dams and tunnels in Lesotho for the purpose of enhancing the use of water from the Senqu (Orange) River and its tributaries by storing, regulating, diverting and controlling the flow to effect the delivery of specified quantities of water to South Africa. At the same time, the delivery system generates hydro-electric power in Lesotho.

The major works of Phase I included the construction of the Katse Dam, the water transfer and delivery tunnels, 'Muela Dam and 'Muela Hydropower Plant and the Mohale Dam.

The Phase II water transfer component comprises a dam at Polihali and a transfer tunnel that will connect the reservoir at Polihali with the Katse reservoir. The Oxbow Hydropower Scheme is the Phase II hydropower component. The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) is the implementing and management authority for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. It acts on behalf of the government of Lesotho.

For additional information, please contact LHDA's Public Relations Manager, Mpho Brown at BrownM@lhda.org.ls or visit www.lhda.org.ls.