

BOLIDEN TARA MINES LIMITED 2008

JOHN ASHTON

In 2007 Mine production proceeded to plan with a total milled tonnage of 2.7 Mt grading 7.72% Zn, 1.47% Pb for the year – bringing Tara’s total production to some 68.2Mt grading 8.36% Zn, 2.00% Pb. In the first half of 2008 some 1.2Mt grading 8.3% Zn and 1.62% Pb was milled with continuing strong production towards the end of 2008 during which time the mine exceeded a total of 70Mt total production. This exceeds the 69.9Mt estimate quoted as the total size of the orebody in the early 70s.

In mid 2008, Boliden commenced a major 27 million euro capital investment in the Tara concentrator comprising replacement of the existing crushing and grinding system with a new circuit for autogenous grinding. The programme of further investments in upgrading Tara’s mobile equipment fleet also continued in 2008.

Following on from the ISO 14001 Environmental Management Certification received in 2007, Tara Mines was awarded the OHSAS 18001 Safety Management Certification and the IS 393 Energy Management Certification by the NSAI in 2008.

Diamond drilling by contractors Priority Drilling continued in SWEXB where additional good intersections of high-grade 3-U lens ore were made. Problems with groundwater at depth in the SWEXB continued and necessitated usage of the services of Skanska-Cementation contractors for grouting of fractures containing high-pressure groundwater.

Near-mine exploration drilling by Priority Drilling continued in 2008 at a high level and targeted several different areas surrounding the orebody. Of these a new area located south and east of SWEX shows considerable potential where strongly mineralized Pale Beds have been located near the P Fault. On-going studies by Tara staff and Dr Mike Philcox and Dr Dave Collier continued to unravel the complex structural development of the Navan Deposit - a summary was presented to the 33rd International Geological Congress at Oslo in August, 2008.

Tara’s regional exploration activities increased in 2008 as part of Boliden’s long-term plans to boost exploration. Currently Boliden Tara Mines Limited holds some 120 Prospecting Licences in Ireland and is by far the largest licence holder. Of these licences some 40% have been held for over two years while the remainder represent a large new uptake of Prospecting Licences in several large blocks in the Irish Midlands principally in the Banagher, Tullamore, Slive Dart and Strokestown areas.

A major airborne gravity survey (Full Tensor Gradiometry) was flown for Tara by Bell Geospace in the autumn of 2008. For more on this see the article in this section. The survey was flown over Tara’s new Tullamore block comprising a total of some 6000 line kilometres with a 200m line spacing and a flight height of 85m. Aurum Exploration Services were used for project management and public relations. Apart from some weather delays the survey progressed smoothly, without any significant incidents and with very few complaints.



Bell GeoSpace C-FTGI Aircraft used for the Gravity Survey over the Tullamore Block.