

# PPC: Clean air versus profit is a dilemma

Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC) has come under criticism for reviving mothballed plants, which it has acknowledged are not environmentally friendly, to meet demand.

Shareholder activist Theo Botha told Business Report he believed that the decision had been "motivated by profit".

PPC chief executive John Gomersall acknowledged that from an environmental perspective, it might have been better to import cement, rather than bring the old plants back on line. However, he said local production was better for South Africa's balance of payments.

At the company's general meeting at the end of last month, Botha pointed out that PPC published no figures on its carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. "Surely that's the starting point," he said.

"Once they know how much they are emitting, then people can address it. By not admitting it, we don't know if we have a small or a big problem."

When asked what PPC's emissions were, Gomersall did not respond directly. He said the group had been on track to cut emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, but had then brought the old equipment back on stream to cater for last year's cement shortage.

PPC's new facilities would cut coal consumption by about 15 percent, he said.

The group said in its past annual report that it was involved in talks with the cement industry and the department of environmental affairs and tourism about retrofitting older plants to cut particle emissions.

However, this will not apply to very old production lines that would be permanently retired "once market conditions permit", says the report.

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