

## Senqu Bridge Nears Completion, Marking a Defining Phase II Milestone



The completion of the Senqu bridge, expected in early February 2026, represents an impressive milestone to usher in 2026 — the 40th anniversary year of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

Final works now underway include the installation of expansion joints and the full completion of balustrades, both scheduled to be concluded soon.

As the first extradosed bridge to be constructed in Lesotho, the Senqu bridge is far more than a crossing over the reservoir. It is a critical lifeline that will reconnect communities on either side of the expansive new water body, while showcasing innovative bridge engineering in one of Africa's most challenging environments.

The Tuesday tour concluded with a visit to Thaba-Phatšoa, a rangeland rehabilitated through the LHDA ICM programme and hailed as an exemplary and flagship initiative selected to host the national launch of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Explaining the purpose and timing of the visit, RSA Chief Delegate Mr Teboho Nkhahle said Commission resolved that, every second monthly meeting will be held at designated Project sites. This approach is intended to ensure that delegates remain abreast of latest developments and gain first-hand appreciation of complex issues to inform Commission decision-making. Such exposure enables the Commission to respond effectively when the LHDA requires support or tables matters for consideration. This visit marked the first in this series.

Speaking during an interview with the Through The Weir team, Mrs Ndileka Mohapi indicated that progress on construction was now encouraging compared to previous visits. She expressed appreciation for the level of technology deployed on major works such as the transfer tunnel, and commended project teams for navigating challenging conditions to advance construction.

“Being on the ground allows us to fully appreciate the challenges raised by the implementing agency, as well as the turnaround strategies being applied to mitigate them. I also commend the Livelihoods Restoration Programme team for the strong collaborations established with government departments and other partners to ensure sustainability beyond construction,” Mrs Mohapi said.



The LHDA also takes pride in the fact that the Senqu bridge is more than an engineering achievement. Its contribution to skills development and professional growth cannot be overstated. The bridge has served as a valuable professional development platform for engineers, environmentalists, project schedulers, contract managers, and other professionals, providing exposure to best practice in large-scale infrastructure projects. Many of these young professionals have since progressed to opportunities elsewhere in the country, the region, and beyond.

'Nyane Makara, a former young professional on the project who is now an engineer at ZUTARI, fondly reflects on her experience on the Senqu bridge. She notes that the project not only strengthened her technical competence as a civil engineer but also sharpened her soft and people skills.

"There are so many elements involved in delivering a project of this magnitude. I am proud to be a more rounded engineer who understands the broader impacts of infrastructure development—creating lasting positive change in people's lives, learning from social dynamics, building from nothing to something, and looking back with pride at the results of hard work and many sleepless nights," says 'Nyane.

Mahlape Jankie, the Environmental Manager at ZUTARI on the Senqu bridge contract, echoes similar sentiments. She states that working alongside experienced environmental specialists and other professionals on this multidisciplinary project enabled significant learning and skills transfer.

"I gained valuable experience in areas such as water quality management, as my role involved monitoring the Senqu river to ensure that water remains clean for downstream users," explains Mahlape.

"This period has been a major milestone in my career. I am confident that my career trajectory will continue to rise based on the experience and knowledge I acquired on this project," she adds.

The completion and opening of the Senqu bridge will be one of several major milestones anticipated in 2026. The Polihali tunnel boring machine is expected to be launched in the first quarter of the year, construction of the concrete face slab on the dam is scheduled to commence around May, and the Mabunyaneng and Khubelu bridges are expected to be completed by the second quarter.

Watch this space for more updates on activities leading up to the opening of the Senqu bridge and other significant milestones as the Phase II continues to take shape.

