



Liberty to reopen Thamesteel plant at Sheerness in UK

A steel plant which closed more than four years ago with the loss of hundreds of jobs is to reopen and start production next year. Steel manufacturer Liberty House said the site at Sheerness in Kent would restart production of bar and rod products by mid-2017. It said up to 100 workers would be employed at the former Thamesteel plant on the Isle of Sheppey.

Thamesteel, which employed 400 people, went into administration in 2012.

The company will recruit an initial workforce of 60 people, rising to 100 as market conditions allow.

VB Garg, chief executive of Liberty Steel Newport, said: "We hope some of the former workers will consider coming back but either way we intend to invest in building skills for the future. We are particularly excited about the prospect of restarting the Sheerness rolling mills which were closed by the previous owner four years ago. Although we originally thought we would move the mills elsewhere, we now believe it will be better to reopen the existing site." The company said the move broadens the range of steel products it can supply to the UK steel market from its works in South Wales and Dalzell in Scotland.



Hebei Province launches campaign against polluting steel mills



China's Hebei province has imposed what it calls "special emission restrictions" on local mills as part of its war on smog, according to a policy document. According to a notice issued by the local Environmental Protection Bureau, 41 million tonnes of steel capacity and 27 million tonnes of coal capacity have already been closed.

Local steel enterprises will have until September 1st 2017, to ensure their facilities comply with tough new standards for sulphur dioxide and other major sources of air pollution, the local Environmental Protection Bureau said in a notice.

Hebei is responsible for nearly a quarter of China's total national steel output. It was

the location of seven of China's 10 smoggiest cities last year and is a major source of air pollution in China's capital, Beijing. The province has pledged to shut 60 million tonnes of crude steelmaking capacity and 40 million tonnes of coal production capacity from 2014 to 2017.

Last year, steel production in Hebei rose 1.3 percent on the year to 188.3 million tonnes, though total capacity remains much higher. Coal output in the province fell 5.4

percent to 82.2 million tonnes. The province, one of the main fronts in a 'war on pollution' declared by Premier Li Keqiang in 2014, has been under pressure to crack down on 'backward' production capacity and firms that break environmental rules.

It was heavily criticised by the Ministry of Environmental Protection earlier this year after an inspection tour revealed that local firms had illegally expanded production capacity and engaged in 'fraudulent practices' aimed at circumventing rules.

Hebei has since launched a campaign against local steel and coal producers, and the provincial government said last week it had uncovered 1,173 illegal projects in the steel sector, involving 93 companies.

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