

Blackstone Completes First Digbee ESG™ Assessment

Blackstone Minerals Limited ("Blackstone" or the "Company") has completed its inaugural Digbee ESG™ assessment to support the development of the Ta Khoa Nickel Project (TKNP) and Ta Khoa Refinery (TKR) in northern Vietnam, collectively referred to as the "Ta Khoa Project."

Blackstone is pleased to announce that the overall score for the assessment was BB (refer Figure 1). The BB score was consistent across the three areas of the assessment – corporate, the Ta Khoa Project (Vietnam) and the Gold Bridge Project (Canada).

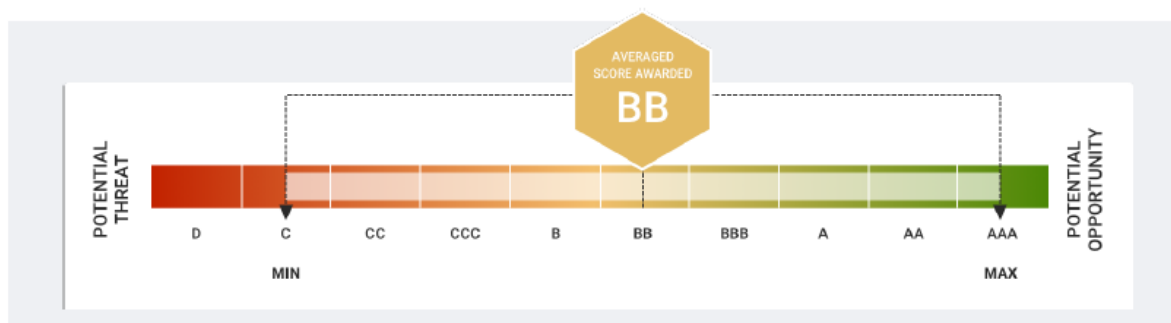


Figure 1. Blackstone's Digbee ESG™ rating

This assessment will assist investors and other stakeholders to understand Blackstone's ESG strengths and opportunities for improvement for the Company as it continues on its journey to becoming a Green Nickel™ producer.

Blackstone Minerals' Managing Director, Scott Williamson, commented:

"Since listing on the ASX in January 2017, Blackstone has made good progress in ensuring that ESG is an active and vital component of the company culture. The Digbee ESG™ assessment is a further demonstration of our commitment to transparent reporting of our performance and progress as we work to achieve the highest levels of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance and practice across our operations."

The Ta Khoa Project BB score reflects the actions already taken to engrain ESG into our business DNA. Fund managers and project financiers are linking minimum ESG standards and criteria to their overall investment decision making processes. The work performed by Blackstone to date as part of the Digbee ESG™ assessment elevates the attractiveness, types and sources of funding that may be available for the Ta Khoa Project."

Key areas for attention, where the issues raised have been resolved or significant progress is being made include:

Environment:

- In support of Company plans to develop the Ta Khoa Project into a zero carbon vertically integrated mining, processing and refinery operation the Company is actively seeking to reduce emissions from the proposed operations through engineering design, use of renewable (hydro-electric) energy sources, electrification of processes and equipment, ISO-compliant Life Cycle Analysis of its products, and identification of high-quality offset opportunities with local application. Opportunities for utilisation of the hydrogen by-product for hydrogen-powered haulage and transport are in the early-stages of assessment.
- At the time of the Digbee ESG™ submission, options for addressing risks associated with the pre-Blackstone era Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) were under consideration by the Upstream PFS. The option selected will see the existing Ban Phuc Nickel Mine (BPNM) TSF drained, capped, and encapsulated by a new Integrated Waste Landform built to store both mine waste and concentrator tailings.

Social

- A Stakeholder Engagement Framework, as well as changes to the way the Company approaches this critical activity (employment of dedicated community officers, training for these roles in best practice engagement, the development of resources and management tools and systems) are being progressively implemented as in-country activities increase.
- Socio-economic studies for the Ta Khoa Project planned for 2022 will be undertaken in accordance with Vietnamese statutory requirements and consistent with international practice. Information will be gathered using a combination of secondary data from government and other publicly available sources, qualitative data sourced from community consultation, and primary data sourced from a household-level survey questionnaire. The information gathered will provide a new baseline against which the Project will measure the effectiveness of its impact mitigation plans and the success of its socio-economic development plans.

Governance:

- In response to the 'second strike', when >25% of shareholders voted against the 2020 Remuneration Report, the Company engaged external advisors to assist in the production of a revised remuneration framework and report disclosures.
- The Company has committed to the implementation of an anonymous whistleblowing, complaints and grievances reporting system which will be progressively rolled out in 2022. This will further enhance the strong governance structure, policies and procedures that have been established to ensure that ESG is at the centre of the company culture.

Jamie Strauss, CEO & Founder, Digbee commented:

"Blackstone Minerals' commitment to implementing effective ESG practice is exemplified by its decision to undertake Digbee's independent and transparent review process, which highlighted the company's areas of existing positive impact in its two very different operations in two very different jurisdictions."

The Ta Khoa Project in Vietnam has already incorporated many operational design features to enable credentials necessary for "green nickel" and implementation of blockchain will improve traceability of its products."

The company has acknowledged the challenges it faces in mitigating the negative impacts of development and operations by monitoring and mapping its carbon footprint,

investigating alternatives in the refining processes, and proactively engaging the locally affected communities."

The full report for the Digbee ESG™ assessment can be found on our website.

Authorised by the Managing Director on behalf of the Board.

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About Digbee ESG™

Digbee ESG™ is the industry standard ESG disclosure framework for the mining sector. It provides mining companies with a right-sized, future looking set of frameworks against which they can credibly disclose, track, compare and improve their ESG performance. Digbee ESG™ has been developed in consultation with mining companies, ESG specialists and capital providers and is endorsed by leading financial institutions, producing mining companies and other industry stakeholders.

About Blackstone

Blackstone Minerals Ltd (ASX: BSX / OTCQX: BLSTF / FRA: B9S) is focused on building an integrated upstream and downstream battery metals processing business in Vietnam that produces NCM Precursor products for Asia's growing Lithium-ion battery industry.

The Company owns a 90% interest in the Ta Khoa Nickel Project (TKNP). The TKNP is located 160km west of Hanoi in the Son La Province of Vietnam (refer Figure 2) and includes an existing modern nickel mine built to Australian standards, which is currently being used to process nickel ore delivered by the underground bulk sample program. The Ban Phuc nickel mine successfully operated as a mechanised underground nickel mine from 2013 to 2016.

Blackstone's TKNP and TKR are the two major cogs in Blackstone's vertically integrated development strategy (together the Ta Khoa Project). The Company's development strategy is underpinned by Blackstone's ability to secure nickel concentrate and Ta Khoa is emerging as a nickel sulfide district of enviable scale with several exploration targets yet to be tested.

In February 2022, Blackstone completed a Pre-Feasibility Study for the TKNP, and presented this on an integrated basis with the proposed TKR development (refer ASX announcement 28 February 2022). The TKR is being designed to have a refining capacity of 400ktpa, with feedstock provided from a combination of concentrate from the TKNP and third-party feed sources (3PF). Pilot Plant testing and Definitive Feasibility Studies are underway and will continue to technically de-risk the Ta Khoa Project.

At both the mine (upstream) and refinery (downstream) level, Blackstone is focused on a partnership model and is collaborating with groups who are focused on sustainable mining, minimising carbon footprint and implementing a fully vertically integrated supply chain.



Figure 2. Ta Khoa Nickel Project Location

Forward Looking Statements

This report contains certain forward-looking statements. The words "expect", "forecast", "should", "projected", "could", "may", "predict", "plan", "will" and other similar expressions are intended to identify forward looking statements. Indications of, and guidance on, future earnings, cash flow costs and financial position and performance are also forward-looking statements. Forward looking statements, opinions and estimates included in this announcement are based on assumptions and contingencies which are subject to change without notice, as are statements about market and industry trends, which are based on interpretations of current market conditions. Forward looking statements are provided as a general guide only and should not be relied on as a guarantee of future performance. Forward looking statements may be affected by a range of variables that could cause actual results or trends to differ materially. These variations, if materially adverse, may affect the timing or the feasibility of the development of the Ta Khoa Project.

The project development schedule assumes the completion for the TKNP of a Definitive Feasibility Study (DFS) in 2023. A DFS for the Ta Khoa Refinery is also assumed to be completed in 2022. Development approvals and investment permits will be sought from the relevant Vietnamese authorities concurrent to studies being completed. Delays in any one of these key activities could result in a delay to the commencement of construction of the TKNP (planned in 2023). This could lead on to a delay to first production, currently planned for 2025. It is expected that the Company's stakeholder and community engagement programs will reduce the risk of project delays. Please note these dates are indicative only.