



micon

**Small But
Mighty**

PROJECT DIRECTED BY
Liv Culling

WRITTEN BY
Laura Watling

Micon International

Small But Mighty

Many would not envisage the UK hub of an international mining company being based in Norfolk. Found in the offices at Grade II listed Keswick Hall, there isn't a better home for this deliberately small mining industry consulting company. Laura Watling speaks to internationally travelled **Managing Director, Liz de Klerk**, about why **Micon International** is the consultancy firm of choice in the mining industry.

Micon International was founded in Toronto 30 years ago, where its head office is still situated. The business was set up by a group of individual mining professionals seeking to form an umbrella business to invoice under. Success of the individuals led them to form one company, sharing clients and leaning on each other's strengths.

So, how did a Canadian mining consultancy end up with an office in the East of England? *"The newly appointed UK Managing Director at the time, Pat Gorman, wanted to move out of the big smoke of London but remain near an international airport. Norwich offered a fantastic combination of countryside living with metropolitan needs,"* explained Mrs de Klerk.

Micon UK is based out of grade II listed Keswick Hall just 4 miles from Norwich city centre. *"There's an interesting juxtaposition between our line of work and our rural setting. Being surrounded by the countryside is good to maintain a healthy mindset,"* said Mrs de Klerk.

Now, Micon has offices in Canada and the UK with representatives in France and Russia.



➤ Liz de Klerk,
Managing Director, Micon International

Nurturing Nature

Micon's professional services include geology, mining engineering, metallurgy, processing, environmental management, market analysis and mineral economics.

The consulting firm can assist mining companies at all stages of mineral property development, from early-stage exploration, drilling and sampling, resource estimation, and technical studies as well as assisting operating mines with optimisation, grade control and expansion.

“ Despite its legacy, most modern-day mining activities are very responsible. ”

Currently, one of the focusses for Micon is ensuring environmental sustainability is at the forefront of every project they play a role in.

“We have to nurture some of our clients to ensure ESG isn't a second thought,” said Mrs de Klerk, “Our vision is that we don't just advise our clients on ESG compliance but help to make it part of their business and that they think about it the second they step foot on the ground”.

Mrs de Klerk continued, *“Despite its legacy, most modern-day mining activities are very responsible. Measures such as upfront finance for environmental rehabilitation and mining companies generating clean energy to then use within the operations are all helping”.*

At the Harz of it

Driving sustainability is where Mrs de Klerk sees an opportunity for Micon. The business is passionate about projects such as the South Harz Potash mine, where environmental performance is at the core of the project ethos.

The South Harz Potash mine is an Australian listed project based in Germany. Rather than

mining for precious metals, this project mines for fertiliser to be used in the food industry.

“We consider this a particularly important project,” explained Mrs de Klerk, “with the current political and financial climate, it is crucial that Europe becomes more self-sustaining, with less need for imports”.

Deliberately small

Despite its international reputation, Micon International is made up of just 17 full-time staff.

All of Micon's staff have site-based industry experience, building a technically strong team. All of the team remain hands-on, despite their additional leadership roles. *“There is no ego at Micon, there are five directors in the business, but they continue to deliver technical work and maintain an open-door policy,”* shared Mrs de Klerk.

“Remaining small is part of our business model,” the Managing Director continued, *“we have found this is a good way to work collaboratively together on projects, sharing each other's skills. It's also good for accountability – there's no bureaucracy and nowhere to hide!”*

“ There is no ego at Micon, there are five directors in the business, but they continue to deliver technical work and maintain an open-door policy. ”

From a growth perspective, Mrs de Klerk sees opportunity in forming strong strategic partnerships within the industry.

“We don't want to be pigeon-holed. Forming strong, strategic partnerships will allow us to offer more bespoke projects without sacrificing our niche as a small business,” said Mrs de Klerk, *“The industry is exploding and of course we want to take advantage of that, but not at the expense of our quality and values”.*



“I love discovering a deposit and seeing that turn into a fully-fledged, functioning, and successful mine. It’s the holy grail.”

Challenging stereotypes

Micon International manages to inadvertently challenge many stereotypes.

“At a careers fair when I was graduating in the UK, I explained that I wanted to take my geology degree into a career in mining. I was laughed at and told I was in the wrong country”, said Mrs de Klerk.

With that in mind, Mrs de Klerk continued her education in South Africa, gaining her Master of Science in Exploration Geology from Rhodes University. Despite the misinformed careers advice, she is now back in the UK heading up a successful mining consultancy firm.

“I’ve always been passionate about exploration and the earth. I love discovering a deposit and seeing that turn into a fully-fledged, functioning, and successful mine. It’s the holy grail,” she said.

During her time in South Africa, Mrs De Klerk worked as a geologist on a platinum mine for Anglo Platinum South Africa. She moved into consulting and managed her own independent business before joining Venmyn Rand, which was taken over by Deloitte during her time at the company.

“Deloitte gave me the opportunity to experience a multi-national giant,” explained Mrs de Klerk. Eventually her desire to return to the UK brought her to Micon in Norfolk. Starting as a senior geologist, Mrs de Klerk took on the role of Managing Director 18 months ago.

As well as a female Managing Director, Micon’s payroll is made up of 25% women. What was once a novelty, women in mining are now becoming the norm.

“Of course I support and encourage women in mining, but it’s important we don’t let it become another box women are placed in. What does it matter that we’re women if we’re the right people for the job?”, Mrs de Klerk said.

Unforeseen circumstances

Micon consults for businesses internationally, and like many international businesses have seen knock on effects from the conflict in Ukraine.

“We have projects in countries such as Ukraine and Poland which have been affected in ways we just wouldn’t have foreseen,” shared Mrs de Klerk, *“for example, we needed to get a batch of samples delivered over the border of Ukraine. The delivery driver was young and simply was not allowed to leave Ukraine. An older delivery driver had to be found who was then able to cross the border”*.

Redevelopment, reuse and redeployment

The next opportunity for Micon International, tying in nicely with its sustainability values, is providing its services on brownfield mines.

“Rather than working on virgin land, we would like to support businesses in the redevelopment, reuse and rehabilitation of old mining sites,” said Mrs de Klerk.

“As well as forming strategic partnerships, we may look to open some regional offices in the former Soviet Union region, ensuring the right people can support the right clients,” said Mrs de Klerk.

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