S&P Global
Platts

METALS DAILY

REPRINT: Volume 8 / Issue 141 / July 19, 2019

BATTERY METALS

Seaborne lithium hydroxide price falls on supply surplus, carbonate holds on week

Seaborne lithium hydroxide prices slipped on week as increased supply continued to be felt by the market, carbonate prices meanwhile found short term respite from price declines.

The Platts lithium hydroxide CIF North Asia weekly assessment fell $100 on the week to be assessed at $12,900/mt Friday, while lithium carbonate sat unchanged at $10,100/mt. Both assessments reflected offers, bids and deals for battery-grade material delivered to the main ports of China , Japan and South Korea .

The bearish sentiment that has consumed the market of late maintained its grip this week. The current oversupply of spodumene coupled with weaker than anticipated growth in electric vehicles in China continued to weigh on mood.

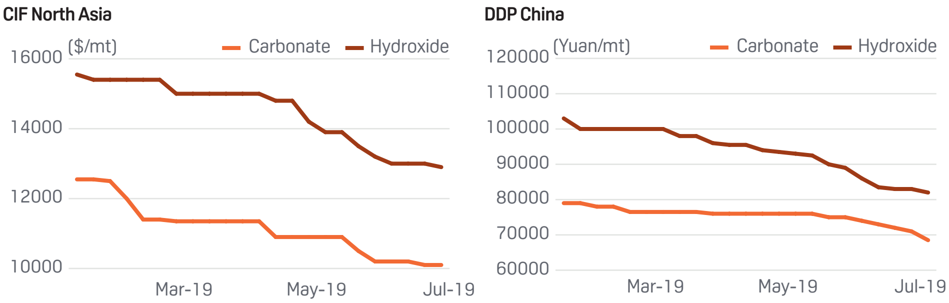
The imbalance in supply and demand growth over the past year remains the major cited factor in prices declines, "demand didn't increase at the same pace of supply in the last 18 months," a consumer said. Picking up material at below $10,500/mt for lithium carbonate and above $12,500/mt for lithium hydroxide, both on a CIF North Asia

(continued on page 2)

BATTERY METALS

Weekly Prices		Change	Date Assessed
Lithium Carbonate			
CIF North Asia ($/mt)	10100	+0	19-Jul-19
DDP China (Yuan/mt)	68500	-2500	19-Jul-19
CIF North Asia Import Parity (Yuan/mt)	78333	-31	19-Jul-19
Lithium Hydroxide			
CIF North Asia ($/mt)	12900	-100	19-Jul-19
DDP China (Yuan/mt)	82000	-1000	19-Jul-19
CIF North Asia Import Parity (Yuan/mt)	100049	-815	19-Jul-19
Cobalt Sulfate			
CIF North Asia ($/mt)	6900	+0	18-Jul-19
DDP China (Yuan/mt)	35000	+0	18-Jul-19
Monthly Prices			
Lithium Spodumene			
FOB Australia ($/mt)	600	-15	28-Jun-19

PLATTS LITHIUM CARBONATE AND LITHIUM HYDROXIDE



Source: S&P Global Platts

METALS DAILY
Volume 8 / Issue 141 / July 19, 2019
ISSN: 2325-0658

To reach Platts: E-mail:support@platts.com; North America: Tel:800-PLATTS-8; Latin America: Tel:+54-11-4121-4810; Europe & Middle East: Tel:+44-20-7176-6111; Asia Pacific: Tel:+65-6530-6430

basis, the consumer commented that "prices decreased quite a bit."

Market participants have reported wide differentials depending on the region over the past few weeks. Battery-grade carbonate, for example, was reported at lows of $9,000/mt CIF China and highs of $13,000/mt CIF North America . The disparity is also present in North Asia , with a Japanese trade quoting tradable values of $9,000/mt CIF China and $10,000-11,000/mt CIF Japan this week.

"Prices will vary a lot depending on the quality, destination, application," a producer said. "There are big differences from the low end to the high end."

Despite the low prices for delivery into China , it is still not enough to incentivise imports.

"It's not that realistic to import from seaborne market in view of the current low prices in the domestic market," a Chinese consumer said. "It's risky considering a delivery time of about one month, which means you will suffer losses amid the current downtrend trajectory."

Both hydroxide and carbonate prices in the Chinese domestic market fell this week. Lithium carbonate fell Yuan 2,500 on week to be assessed at Yuan 68,500/mt DDP China , while hydroxide dropped Yuan 1,000 to be assessed at 82,000/mt DDP China .

As such the Chinese domestic market remains well below the seaborne on an import parity basis. The Platts $10,100/mt CIF mark for carbonate was equivalent to Yuan 78,333/mt, including 13% VAT, based on the Platts' import-parity formula, while hydroxide's price of $12,900/mt was equivalent to Yuan 100,049/mt on the same basis. The Yuan was assessed at 6.8635 to the dollar at 4:30 pm Singapore time Friday.

However, regardless of the region, there is a consensus that the oversupply problem isn't easily addressed and will keep weighing on prices. It's still unclear what could be the bottom level, despite the current prices being relatively close to the conversion cost from spodumene , according to some market participants.

Looking at the wider battery industry and NCM prices have fallen on present low raw material prices, according to a South Korean lithium producer, he added that NCM production in Korea had also risen this year.

— Emmanuel Latham, emmanuel.latham@spglobal.com

— Lucy Tang, lucy.tang@spglobal.com

— Henrique Ribeiro, henrique.ribeiro@spglobal.com

— Xinyue Zhang, xinyue.zhang@spglobal.com

Chinese domestic lithium prices drop on slow demand, lower offers

Chinese domestic lithium carbonate prices fell further this week as producers were obliged to lower their offers amid thin buying interest.

S&P Global Platts assessed battery-grade lithium carbonate at Yuan 68,500/mt Friday, down Yuan 2,500 week on week, while lithium hydroxide dropped Yuan 1,000 to Yuan 82,000/mt. Both assessments were on a delivered, duty-paid China basis.

Although demand remained subdued, some sources expected lithium carbonate prices were close to bottoming out after five consecutive weeks of falls, saying there was limited room for further declines due to production costs.

One Chinese consumer said outlook was still gloomy with the automobile industry still facing pressure in the third quarter. He said it would be good if the industry managed to achieve the target of 1.5 million units estimated at the beginning of the year.

The consumer had just returned from the China Lithium Association's conference in Qinghai province, where he said some brine producers had been "elated", while spodumene producers were "downcast".

"Production costs for brine producers were heard below Yuan 30,000/mt, so they didn't worry much as they still have a profit margin. However, spodumene producers are facing high pressure from production costs," he said.

The consumer added that, even though the two largest converters had cut production, he did not think it would help prices because of the weak demand.

A second consumer said production cost for spodumene converters should be around Yuan 61,000/mt calculated on May spodumene import prices, meaning producers still had some profit margin, although much lower than during the past few years.

"Tradable levels for spodumene should be still around $600/mt FOB Australia . Few could be done at around $580/mt FOB," he said.

A number of Chinese consumer and producer sources put tradeable value of domestic lithium carbonate at Yuan 68,000-69,000/mt, as opposed to large producers' offers around Yuan 70,000/mt.

"Our prices are close to market prices… Cutting production is inevitable - assuming that our production is around 3,000mt per month, the inventory will pile up if the market remains stagnant," one producer source said. He added that his company's regular clients had indicated that demand would remain weak in July and August, but could possibly pick up to some extent in September.

Another producer said he had offered at Yuan 69,000/mt this week, but there were few trades taking place at this level.

"I even have a mind to suspend quotations since there is no buying, only inquiries," he said.

He had heard of trades done at Yuan 66,500/mt, but said this had been sold by someone who wanted to sell out of existing stocks.

A fourth producer source said it was possible to hear lepidolite lithium carbonate traded at Yuan 66,000-67,000/mt due to its lower quality compared with spodumene lithium carbonate .

"It's reasonable to see a drop in lithium carbonate in view of the decline in spodumene prices," he said.

Recyclers were heard to be doing trades around the Yuan 65,000/mt level, while brine industrial grade lithium carbonate was tradeable in the Yuan 59,000-62,000/mt range.

Li hydroxide resumes downward trend

After remaining stagnant last week, Chinese domestic lithium hydroxide prices also resumed their downtrend after producers lowered their prices in response to sparse end-user buying interest.

A Chinese consumer said that he bought lithium hydroxide fine power around Yuan 80,000/mt recently, but Chinese producers denied that they could sell at this price and put prices at Yuan 83,000-85,000/mt.

Producers said coarse sand prices were

more around the Yuan 78,000-80,000/mt level.

One producer said he could not sell at any prices lower than this level and it was "meaningless to sell too low."

He said he mainly relied on long-term relationships and it was "almost hopeless" to find any potential clients now.

— Jacqueline Holman, jacqueline.holman@spglobal.com

— Lucy Tang, lucy.tang@spglobal.com

Cobalt sulfate price downtrend pauses as producers hold levels

Seaborne and Chinese domestic cobalt sulfate markets steadied this week as producers held price levels despite limited buying interest.

S&P Global Platts assessed cobalt sulfate with 20.5% cobalt content at Yuan 35,000/mt delivered, duty-paid China on Thursday, unchanged on the week, while the seaborne market also held steady, to be assessed at $6,900/mt CIF North Asia .

An absence of demand continued to grip the Chinese market this week and little was heard in the way of improvements. Despite this major producers have held their price levels, withholding from lowering prices to attract the meager buying interest available.

"Producers were not keen to sell when the prices below Yuan 40,000/mt and now their desire is even lower," one Chinese producer said.

Along with holding price levels, major Chinese producers have also been heard to be continuing to reduce run rates, cutting production to minimize losses in the current downturn.

Tradable value was pegged at Yuan 35,000-36,000/mt by a major Chinese sulfate producer, who said he was skeptical of trades being heard done at Yuan 34,000/mt. "It's meaningless to sell at a loss," the producer said.

A recycler also took a somber tone, stating that some "cobalt sulfate producers are struggling for survival now."

With many small producers were heard to be selling cheaply in prior weeks to maintain cash flow, the duration and severity of the current price downturn could prove too much to sustain.

However, at least one producer held a more optimistic outlook, saying the market was set to improve. "Cobalt sulfate prices started rebounding this week," he said.

The short-term stability marks the first week that prices have not fallen since late May on the seaborne market and since early June in the Chinese domestic market. Seaborne prices have dropped by $1550/mt since late May and DDP China has dropped Yuan 6,500/mt since early June.

The cobalt sulfate market may finally have found its bottom, with some participants saying that the present prices could be historical lows. Having traded below the cost of production for several weeks, many feel there is limited room for further prices drops.

The sales growth of new electric vehicles in China is expected to be under pressure in the third quarter, according to some market observers. Also in doubt is whether the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers sales target of 1.6 million EVs in 2019 will be reached. One sulfate consumer said the EV outlook "remained gloomy ... it would be good to achieve the target units estimated at the beginning of this year."

— Emmanuel Latham, emmanuel.latham@spglobal.com

— Lucy Tang, lucy.tang@spglobal.com

— Xinyue Zhang, xinyue.zhang@spglobal.com

Chile's Molymet pulls out of lithium processing venture

Chile's Molymet pulled out of a government deal to process lithium in a setback for the South American country's efforts to develop a downstream battery industry on the back of its huge lithium reserves.

The company, which is the world's largest processor of molybdenum , gave no reason for the withdrawal of the 27-year agreement in a statement filed Friday with Chile's financial regulator.

Molibdenos y Metales, to use its full name, was one of three groups to win a government tender to process part of the lithium extracted from northern Chile's Salar de Atacama.

The tender followed the negotiation of new contracts between Chile's economic development agency CORFO and lithium producers Albemarle Corp . and SQM , which required both the companies to sell 25% of the lithium they produced to local industry at preferential prices.

Together with Molymet , China's Sichuan Fulin Industrial Group and a joint venture between Posco and Samsung SDI Co Ltd of South Korea agreed to invest a total of $750 million to process the lithium into cathode materials, which can be used in lithium batteries.

However, last month Posco announced that it had pulled out of the joint venture with Samsung , reportedly because Albemarle would not be able to provide the lithium hydroxide required for the project .

Chile is the world's second largest producer of lithium , thanks to the huge and competitive resources on the Salar de Atacama. After losing ground to Australia due to regulatory restrictions, Albemarle and SQM are striving to ramp up production to meet booming demand for electric vehicles batteries.

— Tom Azzopardi, tom.azzopardi@spglobal.com

Lithium developer European Metals obtains €2 mil loan from CEZ

Lithium developer European Metals , which is looking to develop a site in the Czech Republic, entered a conditional agreement with utility company CEZ for a €2 million ($2.2 million) financing in the shape of a convertible loan, the company said Tuesday.

CEZ Group, which is one of Central and Eastern Europe's largest power utilities, is conducting due diligence on European Metals and its lithium project, according to the announcement.

If successful, the deal could see CEZ become the largest shareholder in European Metals , and potential co-development partner for the Cinovec lithium /tin project through conversion of the note and additional investment.

As part of the investment, Czech Republic-based CEZ is looking to develop energy storage projects to capture power from renewables . The utility also plans to work on electric -vehicle charging and infrastructure.

"Potentially partnering with CEZ further demonstrates EMH's commitment to develop fully the Cinovec Project in conjunction with Czech industry for the benefit of the country's involvement in the battery and EV industries," European Metals Managing Director Keith Coughlan said.

Coughlan told S&P Global Platts in a recent interview that stationary battery storage would be the next big growth area after EVs.

"You cannot effectively use renewable energy without a storage plan," he said during the interview.

— *Ben Kilbey, ben.kilbey@spglobal.com*

Rakishev shows interest in cobalt after Petropavlovsk stake sale

Kazakh entrepreneur and investor Kenges Rakishev has agreed to sell his entire 22.4% stake in London Stock Exchange-listed Petropavlovsk, one of Russia's five biggest gold producers, according to a London Stock Exchange notification published Tuesday.

Almaty-headquartered Fincraft Resources, a company ultimately controlled by Rakishev, entered into a sale and purchase accord relating to the transfer of the issued share capital of Cyprus -registered Fincraft Holdings, the holder of voting rights and financial instruments in Petropavlovsk, to Research & Production Association Altair, according to the notification.

Rakishev's stake in Petropavlovsk — worth £73 million ($90 million) based on Monday's closing share price of £9.65 — will go to Russian billionaire Roman Trotsenko who fully owns Altair. Earlier this year, Trotsenko acquired a 48% stake in GeoProMining, a company which extracts and processes gold , silver , antimony and copper in Russia and Armenia , a spokesman for GeoProMining told S&P Global Platts.

Petropavlovsk does not expect any major change to its plans; the company's development should continue as normal, it said. "With respect to the change, I do not expect it will affect our strategy and plans since Fincraft did not have a controlling stake and therefore neither will any new shareholder who purchases a stake from Fincraft," the spokesman for Petropavlovsk told Platts.

The company's gold sales are on track to meet its current full year target of 450 – 500,000 oz. Last year, Petropavlovsk produced 422,300 oz of gold . It has recently announced a $25-$30 million doubling of its flotation capacity by building a new facility at its Pioneer mine in the Amur region, Russia's Far East.

Fincraft Resources is already expected to participate in another mining development. "Rakishev sold his stake to release capital; he is reported to raise $200-$300 million to invest in cobalt and nickel mines in Gornostaevskoe deposit, eastern Kazakhstan , with the output meant for exports to Asian nations," Oleg Petropavlovsky of BCS Financial Group told Platts.

"To explain his interest in cobalt , in particular, we have to recall the flying start of electric vehicles. This segment is full of promises," added the analyst.

— *Ekaterina Bouckley, katya.bouckley@spglobal.com*

New ore processing plant commissioned at DRC's Deziwa copper-cobalt mine

Wet commissioning of a crushing circuit was launched last Thursday at the Deziwa copper -cobalt mining processing project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, project contractor China 15th Metallurgical Construction Group said Friday.

The crushing circuit is an integral part of the Deziwa processing and refining facility, which will have an initial capacity 4.5 million mt/year of ore , producing 80,000 mt of copper and 8,000 mt of cobalt , according to Deziwa Mining Company, which owns and is developing the project, which lies 35 km west of Kolwezi.

Deziwa Mining is a 49/51 partnership between DRC's state miner Gécamines and Chinese state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group). It anticipates the project will start up production in December 2019.

CNMC has committed $800 million to finance Deziwa's development. Gécamines will repay CNMC the entire investment through its share of Deziwa's production over a fixed period, after which, full ownership of the project will be transferred back to Gécamines.

Gécamines intends to develop Deziwa eventually into its flagship operation with 200,000 mt/year of copper production.

Africa's top copper producer, DRC produced 1.22 million mt of copper concentrate and 109,402 mt of cobalt raw material in 2018, up by 11.9% and 32.7%, respectively from 2017, according to statistics compiled by the nation's central bank.

— *Winnie Lee, winnie.lee@spglobal.com*

Western Areas' nickel in-concs output rebounds 3% in FY 2018-19

Nickel in-concentrate production of Australia's Western Areas rebounded 2.9% year on year to 21,675 mt at an average 4% processed grade and 88% recovery rate in financial year 2018-19 (July-June), the Australian miner said Thursday in its June quarterly report.

In FY 2017-18, it milled 21,060 mt of nickel in-concentrate, 8.5% lower than the year before.

Western Areas also posted a 4.5% growth of nickel in nickel concentrate sold in FY 2018-19 to 21,483 mt, versus a 9.2% decline in FY 2017-18.

News of the production rebound comes on the heels of continuing signs of tightening supply in the nickel market, it said, with LME stockpiles now falling to their lowest level in seven years to around 150,000 mt of available nickel .

The market development is working to Western Areas' favor as it plans to begin offtake discussions soon with various market participants. Its existing offtake agreements with BHP and China's Tsingshan Group are due to expire early 2020.

Western Areas' mined nickel production of 23,208 mt in FY 2018-19 accounts for more than 15% of Australia's total of 150,000 mt estimated by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.

In a report released earlier this month, DIIS has anticipated world nickel consumption growth to outpace production growth over 2019-2021, drawing down stock levels and leading to a greater deficit in the world.

Prices are forecast to average just over $12,800/mt this year, lower than 2018's $13,133/mt, before rising to $14,400/mt in 2021.

— Winnie Lee, winnie.lee@spglobal.com

Anglo American Platinum forms JV to develop next generation battery technology

Anglo American Platinum and Canadian miner Platinum Group Metals on Monday unveiled a joint venture to be known as Lion Battery Technologies to develop next-generation platinum and palladium battery technology.

"Early indications are that lithium air and lithium sulfur batteries could use 0.5 oz to 1.0 oz [platinum] and [palladium] to produce orders of magnitude improvements in the performance of" battery electric vehicles, NOAH Capital Markets mining analyst René Hochreiter said in a note Monday. "This is massively positive for PGM producers and demand for" platinum and palladium .

Hochreiter added that "we estimate approximately the same BEVs as [fuel cell electric vehicles] by 2040; with each [fuel cell] vehicle requiring 1 oz/vehicle before thrifting, we estimate that 20 million BEVs and 20 million FCEVs will require approximately 40 million oz of [platinum and palladium] by 2040, and 20 million oz of [platinum and palladium] by 2025 already."

Hochreiter believes this will mean that by 2025 there will have been a doubling of platinum demand from 2019 levels and an 80% increase in palladium demand.

"Catalysis seems a logical path to improving battery performance and it's likely that noble metals , with strong catalytic properties, like platinum or palladium , will find a central role in the development of battery technology in the future," Arlington Group analyst Roger Breuer told S&P Global Platts Monday.

Transforming energy storage

The rechargeable lithium -air battery has the highest theoretical specific energy of any rechargeable battery and may transform energy storage if a practical device could be realized, according to a collaborative study by the universities of Bar Ilan, California , Oxford, Waterloo and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory .

The JV between Amplats – the world's largest platinum producer – and Platinum Group Metals has entered into an agreement with Florida International University, the former said.

This will aim to further develop a research program that uses platinum and palladium to release the potential of lithium air and lithium sulfur battery chemistries to increase their discharge capacities and cyclability, the South African company said.

Under the agreement with FIU, Lion will have exclusive rights to all intellectual property developed and will lead all commercialization efforts, Amplats said.

"The current focus of the research & development (R&D) is to improve the readiness of the technology," spokeswoman Jana Marais told Platts Monday. "Our primary focus is to determine the viable concentration of platinum group metals (PGMs) needed to achieve the battery performance desired, especially on discharge capacity and cyclability."

The R&D sponsorship is envisaged to last for three years to improve the technology readiness level, Marais said.

"Commercialization will depend upon the results achieved during this first R&D phase," she said.

— Filip Warwick, filip.warwick@spglobal.com

Investor uses sale proceeds to fund Kazakh battery metals project

Proceeds from the recently agreed sale of 22.4% stake in Russian gold miner Petropavlovsk by Kazakh entrepreneur Kenges Rakishev will be invested in the Gornostaevskoye nickel and cobalt project in eastern Kazakhstan , a spokesman for Rakishev said. The stake was worth $90 million, according to industry estimates.

Gornostaevskoye represents one of the largest cobalt and nickel deposits in Kazakhstan . It can produce at least 1,000 mt/year of cobalt and 15,000 mt/year of nickel sulphate.

Global demand for these metals is growing, along with the use of batteries and other technologies, providing a significant opportunity to grow Gornostaevskoye, the spokesman said.

Cobalt demand is expected to double by 2025, according to Fincraft Resources, the investment firm owned by Rakishev.

Rakishev transferring funds to these projects is an astute move, according to one analyst. "Cobalt is becoming vital, but the catch is 60% of its production is concentrated in a rather unstable place — the Democratic Republic of Congo . Therefore all cobalt deposits outside Congo meet much interest," Boris Krasnojenov, an analyst at Alfa Bank, told Platts.

So far, a lack of finance has been a major stumbling block for the development of Kazakhstan's many deposits, according to the analyst. "The country does not have much money to develop its resources single-handedly. It makes sense to invite the Chinese , but the Kazakh government is apprehensive about doing sp. In terms of population, it is a small nation, with just 18 million people, and they are rightly loath to make themselves dependent on Chinese capital," he said.

The entrepreneur continues to believe in Petropavlovsk's further development and growth as well as in the attractiveness of gold and does not exclude the possibility of further investments in this sector, according to the spokesman.

Rakishev invested in Petropavlovsk when the company was distressed. To date, a lot of work has been done and the company has achieved some milestones, including the launch of the pressure oxidation (POX) hub, producing gold doré bars at Pokrovskiy in the Amur region in Russia's Far East, he said.

POX technology is one of several that can treat refractory gold , which is ore naturally resistant to recovery by standard cyanidation and carbon adsorption processes, according to the spokesman.

Technically, the capacity already exists to treat 500,000 mt/year of input feed at the POX plant, but to operate at the maximum level it needs to find additional refractory material.

Initially this involves using third-party concentrates, but the company will increasingly use more of its own from next year onwards once the flotation plant is completed at its flagship Pioneer asset, also in the Amur region.

— Ekaterina Bouckley, katya.bouckley@spglobal.com

Mining companies in Zambia withholding over $630 mil of investment: CoM

Mining companies in Zambia are withholding over $630 million meant for investment in the sector after the introduction of new duties and royalties as fears heighten over the introduction of the gross sales tax on September 1, Zambian Chamber of Mines CEO Sokwani Chilembo said Wednesday.

Amid repeated appeals for dialogue with the Zambian government by mining operators over the regulations the security of tenure on investment remains uncertain.

"There's no feedback yet on this matter which has impacted negatively on the industry," Chilembo told S&P Global Platts. "We projected before the budget, over US $630 million for investment in new and old projects but many companies have not released it."

Last September, Zambia's finance minister Margaret Mwanakatwe announced the $7.2 billion 2019 national budget to lawmakers revealing new mining duties and increased royalties, ostensibly to bring down debt.

The royalties, effective from January, revised Zambia's sliding scale for royalties of 4% to 6% by 1.5 percentage points and introduce a new 10% tax when the price of copper exceeds $7,500/mt.

A new 15% export duty on precious metals was also introduced, while copper and cobalt concentrate imports incur a new 5% levy.

The scale is adjusted so royalties are paid at higher levels as commodity prices climb and are reduced as prices fall.

Nevertheless mining companies are concerned over the impending sales tax, effective from September 1, initially planned for 1 July to allow for further consultations including lawmakers. It is feared if in place, may aggravate their problems.

"There is no capital expenditure figures to allow for growth and most companies are unable to carry out various operations and with the closure of smelters" at Glencore's Mufulira copper smelter at its Mopani copper mine and Vedanta Resources Nchanga copper smelter at its Konkola copper mine "to treat concentrates and the sales tax in place, we are unlikely to grow faster as a sector. … These are some of the factors that are affecting copper production." Chilembo said.

— Jeff Kapembwa, newsdesk@spglobal.com

Battery Metals Weekly wrap-up

The UK government, its perspective on electric-vehicle adoption, and what can be done to speed it up, was in focus again this week.

Jaguar Land Rover, the UK's largest automotive exporter, will get a GBP500 million ($620 million) loan guarantee from the government so it can move ahead with development and production of electric vehicles — another sure sign the government has its sights firmly set on an all-electric future.

The guarantee will be issued by UK Export Finance, the UK's export credit agency, and will enable the automaker to secure a GBP625 million loan from commercial banks.

Earlier this month, JLR unveiled plans to produce a range of new electric vehicles in the UK as it prepares to offer customers electric options for all Jaguar and Land Rover models from 2020.

So, what else has the UK government been up to this week?

Well, if you have any money left after forking out for a lovely new nest, then you will be able to invest in an electric plug-in car without losing any sleep. All new-build homes could soon be fitted with an EV charging point.

"The proposals aim to support and encourage the growing uptake of electric vehicles within the UK by ensuring that all new homes with a dedicated car parking space are built with an electric charging point, making charging easier, cheaper and more convenient for drivers," a statement said.

And it was not just the UK looking at making powering your EV easier.

Lithium developer European Metals, seeking to develop a site in the Czech Republic, entered a conditional agreement with utility company CEZ for a Eur2 million ($2.2 million) financing in the shape of a convertible loan.

As part of the investment, Czech Republic-based CEZ is looking to develop energy storage projects to capture power from renewables. The utility also plans to work on EV charging and infrastructure.

European Metals Managing Director Keith Coughlan told S&P Global Platts in a recent interview that stationary battery storage would be the next big growth area after EVs. "You cannot effectively use renewable energy without a storage plan," he said.

With a lot of industry focus is on lithium demand generated by the potential EV boom, what about platinum and palladium?

This week, mining powerhouse Anglo American Platinum, alongside smaller industry pier Platinum Group Metals, announced a new venture, Lion Battery Technologies to accelerate the development of next-generation battery technology using platinum and palladium.

Platinum, a key ingredient in diesel engine auto catalysts designed to soak up some emissions, has been hammered in recent years following the 'diesel-gate' scandal in which automakers fudged pollution data.

Benny Oeyen, executive head of market development at Anglo American Platinum, said: "This exciting early-stage technology aligns with our broader strategy to bring new technologies to market that will help us secure future demand for the platinum group metals we mine and pave the way to a more sustainable energy future. Our commitment to market development is underscored by our relationship with AP Ventures, of which we are a cornerstone investor and who is a potential investor in this technology as it matures."

And finally, congratulations to Mark Preston and his Formula E team, DS TECHEETAH, which won the championship title again.

"Winning a second title, is a demonstration of consistence and clockwork precision critical to prolonged success in racing. The sort of success that only comes about when passionate people work together seamlessly," it said.

Team driver Jean-Eric Vergne was more to the point, saying the double win was "unreal".

Until next week, readers, keep it real.

— Ben Kilbey, ben.kilbey@spglobal.com