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VODAFONE COOK ISLANDS AND AVAROA CABLE LTD ANNOUNCE FIRST CUSTOMERS ON MANATUA CABLE

- *Vodafone & Avaroa Cable strike multi-year partnership deal -*
- *Avaroa Cable secures first new telecoms operating license under Competition Act 2019 -*
- *Vodafone customers on Aitutaki Atoll now connecting over the new Manatua Cable -*
 - *Aitutakian's the first to benefit from ground-breaking Polynesia cable -*
 - *Island is one of the smallest in the world to benefit from fibre connection -*
 - *Aitutaki hails welcome boost to connectivity -*
 - *Dawn of a new era for population of 1,700 –*
- *Further announcements on international connectivity to be in the coming weeks -*

AITUTAKI, COOK ISLANDS, 28 AUGUST 2020 - Avaroa Cable Ltd and Vodafone Cook Islands have today announced the signing of a multi-year partnership for use of

the Manatua Cable. The deal will see Vodafone place Manatua cable connectivity at the heart of their ambitious plans to transform connectivity in the Cook Islands.

The companies announced that Aitutaki would be the first to benefit with services already transferred to the cable. The development makes Vodafone, Avaroa and the Cook Islands the first to make use of the ground-breaking 3600km Manatua One Polynesia cable, which was completed only last month.

Engineers from Vodafone and Avaroa Cable worked through the night to transfer users on the island to the new infrastructure, ensuring the transition was seamless. Fibre connectivity put in place between the two company's facilities earlier in the year for testing meant the transition was both quick and efficient.

The cable replaces satellite connectivity that had previously connected the island and makes Aitutaki, with a population of just 1700, one of the smallest fibre connected islands in the world.

The announcement coincides with Avaroa Cable Ltd becoming the first company to be awarded a telecommunications operating license under the new Cook Islands Competition and Regulatory Authority Act 2019.

The new connection will be followed by new international connectivity for the Cook Islands over the Manatua cable into Rarotonga, from which Aitutaki will also benefit. This was expected to come into place in a matter of weeks and would be the subject of a separate announcement.

The swift adoption of the cable is testament to the collaboration between Avaroa Cable and Vodafone Cook Islands, with both organisations recognising the transformational impact the cable will have.

The Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable Project has been supported by a grant from the New Zealand Aid Programme and a development loan from the Asian Development Bank.

Honourable Mark Brown, Deputy Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, said:

“The Manatua cable is a crucial investment for the Cook Islands and is all the more timely at this very challenging time. I know that the cable will play a vital part of our economic recovery in this COVID world we now live in. We are all doing a crash course in using technology in our everyday work and business as a result of the pandemic. Our future prosperity as a nation will depend a great deal on technology and how we use it. This important piece of technology infrastructure will provide our people with better opportunities to climb the technology ladder and fast track the growth of our knowledge economy.”

Phill Henderson, Chief Executive Officer Vodafone Cook Islands, said:

“This is a significant achievement for Manatua and ACL and we are excited about the opportunities that the cable connectivity opens up for our customers. These are commercially challenging times for all of us particularly when entering into multi-year multimillion dollar agreements, however the Manatua cable positions us well as we continue our push in taking the Cook Islands into a new digital society. Vodafone is pleased to be the anchor customer and the first to use the Manatua service commercially. We can now leverage the improved performance of the Cable system to

provide a better customer experience and will be advising customers of the benefits that the additional Manatua capacity will provide.”

Dr Ranulf Scarbrough, Chief Executive Officer Avaroa Cable Ltd and Co-Chair of the Manatua Cable Consortium said:

“It’s been fantastic to help Vodafone bring the power of the Manatua cable to their customers on Aitutaki and for Aitutakians to be the first to benefit from this massive regional investment. And this is only just the first step.

The deal is a major commitment from Vodafone at an incredibly challenging time globally. It shows a bold pledge to the transformation of telecommunications in the Cook Islands, with ACL’s cable connectivity firmly at the heart of their plans. It’s a fantastic endorsement of the ACL team and this new Cook Islands company.”

Michael Henry, Chair of Cook Islands Investment Company and Aitutaki resident:

“This is a welcome boost to the internet service on Aitutaki. It seems like just yesterday that the cable ship landed Manatua here on the island, yet here we are with our nation’s digital transformation already starting right here. It’s a proud and exciting moment for all of Aitutaki.”

Rachel Bennett, Acting New Zealand High Commissioner to the Cook Islands, said:

“The improvement of digital connectivity in the Pacific is critical for regional development. The Manatua cable is a symbol of the close partnership between New Zealand and Cook Islands, and our joint commitment to improve the lives of Cook Islanders”.

Leah Gutierrez, Director General of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Pacific Department said:

"The arrival of high-speed broadband will boost Cook Islands' international connectivity. The social and economic benefits of the new high-speed internet service will be many – especially in the health, education and finance sectors."

ENDS

Media 1 of 3:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpFjqxzmZBI>

Details: Avaroa Cable Ltd highlights.

Media 2 of 3:



Details: Phill Henderson of Vodafone Cook Islands and Ranulf Scarbrough of Avaroa Cable Ltd at the Vodafone Cook Islands office, Rarotonga, August 2020

Media 3 of 3:



Details: Aitutaki, Cook Islands. The first to benefit from the Manatua One Polynesia Cable.
Photo credit: Ewan Smith

Further information

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About Vodafone Cook Islands

Vodafone Cook Islands is a telecommunications services provider offering mobile, fixed line, broadband and a range of other telecommunications technology-based services. Controlling ownership of the business is held by Amalgamated Telecom Holdings Limited, a publicly listed company on the Fiji stock exchange. The business is 55% locally owned.

About Avaroa Cable Ltd

ACL is the Pacific's newest international fibre operator providing wholesale connectivity services in the Cook Islands. ACL is a crown corporate entity (CCE) and manages the Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable project and its commercialisation as an international and domestic wholesale operator. ACL has been established, and the independent board which oversees it is appointed by, the Cook Islands Investment Corporation, which is the government body responsible for crown corporate entities and state-owned enterprises. ACL's board is chaired by local business woman Tatiana Burn. Funding has been provided by the Cook Islands Government, the New Zealand Aid Programme and the Asian Development Bank. (www.avaroacable.com)

About the Manatua – One Polynesia Cable

The Manatua cable will be 3600km long connecting Samoa, Niue, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Tahiti and Bora. The cable will be capable of operating at up to 10 tera bits per second (= 10,000,000 megabits per second) using state-of-the-art fibre optic technology, enough speed to download 300 high definition movies every single second.

About the Manatua Cable Consortium

The ground-breaking Manatua cable consortium was formed following the signing of an International Treaty in November 2018 between the governments of the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and French Polynesia. The purpose of the consortium is to build and operate the Manatua cable. The consortium comprises Avaroa Cable Ltd (for the Cook Islands), Niue Telecom, the Samoa Submarine Cable Company and Office de Poste et Telecommunications (for French Polynesia). It is the first consortium of its type anywhere in the Pacific.

About the New Zealand Aid Programme

The Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable project has been part funded with NZ\$15m of grant funding from the New Zealand Aid Programme. (www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development)

About the Asian Development Bank

The Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable project has been part funded with US\$15m of loan funding from the Asian Development Bank. (www.adb.org)