



SURVEY WORK STARTS ON NEW INTERNET CONNECTIVITY FOR COOKS ISLANDS

Important milestone reached in transformational project for Polynesia

Faster, cheaper, more reliable and more resilient communications will be within reach from 2020

Work has commenced on the detailed marine survey for the 3500km route of the Manatua - One Polynesia fibre optic cable. As well as Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the Cooks Islands, the new cable will also connect Samoa, Niue, and Tahiti and Bora Bora in French Polynesia. The cable is expected to come into service in 2020.

Survey vessel Geo Resolution is undertaking a detailed study of the cable route using state-of-the-art marine survey technology, including advanced sonar and diving operations, ahead of cable laying which will start later this year. Survey work commenced in Samoa in April and will follow the cable route East, arriving in the Cook Islands in the next few days.

The main vessel will assess the sea bottom, up to 5000m deep in places, and will use smaller vessels and divers in shallower water nearer the shore.

The Cook Islands Ministry of Transport will be issuing a "Notice to Mariners" requiring marine traffic to avoid the survey operations.

Dr Ranulf Scarbrough, ACL CEO and Vice-Chair of the Manatua Cable Consortium, said: *"The Manatua One Polynesia cable is a huge engineering challenge involving laying 3500km of state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure. We still have a long way to go but the benefits will be worth it with the opportunity for dramatic improvement in our internet service being within reach in the first half of 2020."*

Cooks Islands Investment Corporation CEO Petero Okotai said: *"The Cooks Islands Government has worked tirelessly over many years to build a partnership to improve connectivity to the Cooks Islands. As ACL's parent company, it is very exciting for CIIC to see work beginning on this strategically important project for our nation"*



Survey Vessel Geo Resolution (Credit: EGS)

ENDS

Further information

Enquiries about this news release should be made to Ranulf Scarbrough on +682-50731 or by email to ranulf.scarbrough@cookislands.gov.ck

About the Cook Islands

The Cooks Islands is an independent democracy comprising 15 islands in the south Pacific of c.15,000 people operating in free association with New Zealand.

About the Manatua – One Polynesia Cable

The Manatua cable will be 3500km 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 Cooks 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 Avaroa Cable Ltd

ACL is the state-owned enterprise established by the Government of the Cooks Islands to manage its involvement in the Manatua Cable project and operate the cable on behalf of the Cooks Islands. Funding has been provided by the Cook Islands Government, the New Zealand Government Aid Programme and the Asian Development Bank. ACL is overseen by an independent board chaired by local business woman Tatiana Burn.

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 Cooks 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)

About Cook Island Investment Corporation

The Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC) is a statutory Corporation of the Cook Islands Government. CIIC was established in 1998 to manage Crown assets including land and properties on Rarotonga and the outer islands, and subsidiaries.
(www.ciiconline.com)