

AVAROA CABLE LIMITED - PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



VESSEL DEPARTS AFTER SUCCESSFUL SURVEY FOR NEW INTERNET CONNECTIVITY FOR COOKS ISLANDS

Engineering 'green light' for Manatua cable lay in Cook Islands waters

Important data gathered ensuring near-zero environmental impact

26 MAY 2019
Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Survey work has been successfully completed in Cook Islands waters for the 3500km route of the Manatua - One Polynesia fibre optic cable. As well as Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the Cook 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.

The work has been undertaken as part of the contract signed in November 2018 with Subcom LLC for complete turnkey delivery of the entire Manatua Cable System.

Survey vessel Geo Resolution undertook extensive sonar bathymetry survey work over the last two weeks close into the reefs on Rarotonga and Aitutaki at the selected cable landing points. The vessel is operated by survey company EGS under contract to Subcom LLC for

the Manatua consortium. It is capable of high-resolution seafloor mapping using multi-beam sonar up to 5km either side of the vessel in deep water.

Within the lagoon waters inside the reef, and through the reef passages, Geo Resolution's shallow draft 10m satellite vessel Ming Jao took over the job, towing a sonar transponder behind it.

Local divers also supported the work, using rope lines to mark the optimum cable path on the seafloor, steering the route around sensitive marine life.

Back on board the GEO Resolution, the team of engineers and scientists continuously analysed the data being returned from multiple sensors, passing it back to the Subcom in the USA and to the Avaroa Cable Ltd team in Rarotonga to scrutinise.

Continuously changing seabed conditions, including chains of sea mountains, trenches and other geological features, will require the cable to carefully weave a path through these features with pin-point precision, a challenging task in up to 5000m of water. Closer to shore, inclines of up to 70 degrees were carefully assessed in order to ensure the cable remains stable and fault-free for the next 25 years.

Rutaki passage presented the biggest challenge, with significant swell, tide and strong currents creating complex conditions for survey personnel. Nevertheless, the required data was successfully collected.

As well as being used to design the exact cable route, the data collected will also feed into the Environmental Impact Assessment which will be submitted prior to the marine cable works being undertaken. This will help confirm the impact on the environment from the cable as being near to zero. The insights gathered will also be shared in the public consultations ACL will be holding in June to update the public on plans for the cable, as well as listening and responding to any concerns people may have.

Dr Ranulf Scarbrough, ACL CEO and Vice-Chair of the Manatua Cable Consortium, said: *"The Manatua cable survey team have done an excellent job in Cook Islands waters. The data being returned is some of the highest quality I have seen and provides an excellent basis on which to ensure our cable follows the safest route and the one with the lowest impact to marine life. This is a green light from an engineering perspective."*

Tatiana Burn, Chair of the Board of ACL said: *"It's great to see this important work being undertaken in such a high quality and professional fashion. Our goal for the Manatua cable has always been for world class engineering quality and this work very much lives up to that expectation."*

After a month at sea, the team on GEO Resolution enjoyed some shore leave on Rarotonga, as well as taking the opportunity to stock up on fresh supplies. The vessel will now head to French Polynesia to complete the Manatua survey work. Once all data is collected and analysed, cable manufacture can begin.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE – SEE LATER IN THIS RELEASE

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Further information

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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)

ALL PHOTOS AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA USE

Contact rebecca.tavioni@cookislands.gov.ck for high resolution versions

Survey vessel Geo Resolution tied up at Avatiu Port, Raratonga for shore leave and stores before departing to complete survey activity through to French Polynesia:



Survey vessel GEO Resoltuion's main survey operations deck and inshore satellite survey vessel Ming Jao stowed on board:



Survey vessel GEO Resolution's main data collection and analysis hub during a quiet period in Avatiu Port:



One of the survey operations crew from survey vessel Geo Resoltuion:



Survey vessel GEO Resolution, satellite survey vessel Ming Jao and survey operations staff coordinating the complex survey operations in Rutaki passage, Rarotonga:

