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Letter of intent (July 2019)

“This is an historic moment,” Councillor Lawson Henry (Chair of the Economic Development Committee) said. “A truly transformational project for St Helena. When you consider the start of commercial air services just under two years ago, it is incredible that in [a few more years] we will again look back and think how far St Helena has come. Imagine streaming videos in our classrooms, telemedicine services in our hospital, and entrepreneurs developing digital businesses from the comfort of their own homes. Our next challenge once the cable is landed is to ensure that it is affordable to everyone on St Helena.”

“We are pleased to work with Equiano on such an important project for St Helena,” SHG Financial Secretary Dax Richards said. “The cable has the potential to transform life on our island and should create new opportunities to stimulate sustainable social and economic development. It is important that everyone is able to benefit from what improved connectivity and accessibility will bring. After all, that is one of the key conditions underlying the EU funding for this project.”

Contract signing (December 2019)

“This is a huge positive step for St Helena, and one of a number of progressive steps that shall be announced over the next two years relating to development of digital opportunities on St Helena,” Councillor Lawson Henry (Chair of the Economic Development Committee) said.

“This is great news for the island,” SHG Financial Secretary Dax Richards said. “Significant additional economic development on St Helena is conditional on improved connectivity and accessibility, and therefore the delivery of the fibre project is crucial to economic growth. We are pleased to reach an agreement with Google and look forward to working with them on this project. The delivery of the project is a key action in the Sustainable Economic Development Plan – in order to develop the satellite ground stations, financial services, work from home, academia research and conferences, film location and tourism sectors.”

“We are excited to collaborate with SHG to announce the Equiano branch into St Helena,” Global Network Infrastructure Strategy, Submarine, Google, Jayne Stowell, said. “We are deeply committed to boosting the world’s connectivity as well as ensuring countries and communities benefit from the Equiano cable.”

Telecom Egypt signing (November 2020)

“From an operational perspective this is a key milestone for St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project, as we now have an association with an international partner of high repute who will ensure that all the necessary technical prerequisites are installed in readiness for the arrival of the Equiano system,” said St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project Manager, Jeremy Roberts.

“We are delighted to have signed this agreement with St Helena Government as this cooperation is part of the initiation of Telecom Egypt’s endeavour in Western Africa and is a step forward in Telecom Egypt’s plan to expand its services beyond the MENA region and fortify its global presence by providing subsea solutions to global partners,” Telecom Egypt’s VP for International & Wholesale,

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Seif Mounib, said. “This solution will enable entities within St Helena to access large capacities that will certainly improve the quality of service and enhance customer experience.”

MCC engineers arrival (March 2021)

“The activities the MCC engineers will undertake during their stay on the island will allow for the necessary front-haul and beach manhole infrastructure to be installed to accommodate the Equiano system that is subject to be landed by Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN),” said St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project Manager, Jeremy Roberts.

Modular Cable Landing Station arrival (March 2021)

“I am extremely pleased on how well AMSS and SHG were able to work together with the issues presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, handling all planning and coordination via emails and conference calls,” said Director of MCLS from AMSS, Bob Pohlman. “Once the modules arrived on the MV Helena, all teams worked together effortlessly – as if they had been working together for a long time. We can now proceed in making the building weather tight and reinstalling all the crossovers, as we work toward connecting power. It has been my pleasure to meet some great folks and hopefully we are providing them a link to a prosperous future.”

“The arrival of the MCLS, which will accommodate the landing of the Equiano cable system, is one of the major cornerstones of this exciting and strategically important project for St Helena,” said St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project Manager, Jeremy Roberts. “It is also important to stress that the transportation, offloading, and positioning of the CLS units could not have been accomplished without the support and commitment of several major stakeholders.”

Pre-Cable Landing (August 2021)

“The shore landing of the Equiano St Helena branch should be viewed as a monumental step in connecting the island to one of the world’s most sophisticated cable systems,” said St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project Manager, Jeremy Roberts. “The Equiano cable will be the first to take advantage of a new technique called ‘fibre-level switching’, which will drastically improve the cable’s ease of deployment as well as reduce its cost. Fibre-level switching, as the name suggests, doesn’t touch a signal’s particular wavelength. Instead, it mechanically moves the signal to the correct cable, like getting on the right bus to your destination. Fibre-level switching grew out of another recent Google undersea cable development, called space-division multiplexing, which raises the number of fibre pairs that can be packed into a cable. Once St Helena is fully interconnected with the main Equiano system, which will run from Lisbon, Portugal to Cape Town, South Africa, island residents and businesses alike will be exposed to technologies which will revolutionise our way of life, opening up the island to all kinds of benefits.”

“The landing of the Equiano undersea cable this year and, once ‘live’, will open up many prospects for advancements in governance, education, health, business and voluntary,” said Gareth Drabble, St Helenian Chevening Scholar who won the Bridging the Digital Divide Research Competition

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sponsored by EDF11 and who is undertaking the research project alongside Dr Drew Whitworth of the Manchester Institute of Education.

Cable landing

“This is a momentous occasion for St Helena, bringing us one step closer to providing faster internet connectivity to residents and driving the island forward in the digital age,” said St Helena’s Fibre Optic Cable Project Manager, Jeremy Roberts. “This landing means we physically take ownership of our own branch, which is 1,154 km long. The *Teliri* is now sailing towards the west coast of Africa, pulling the fibre optic cable behind her to attach to the main trunk of the Equiano system, connecting Europe and South Africa.”

“St Helena Government once again acknowledges the €21.5 million allocated by the EU under the EDF’11 programme to the territory, of which St Helena received around €17 million to support the delivery of the SHG Digital Strategy and to achieve the goals of the 10 Year Plan,” said SHG’s Financial Secretary, Dax Richards. “All those who have been involved in this project so far should be congratulated. Whilst there is still much to do, we continue to prepare for digital transformation. We look forward to businesses and consumers having access to faster, reliable and affordable connectivity, one of the key building blocks to ensuring sustainable economic growth.”

“We have been involved in the project for a couple of years now, and with local teams and contractors we managed to deliver a solution in readiness for the cable landing,” said SHG’s Head of Technical Services, Chris Peters (responsible for the civil and infrastructure works that allowed the cable to be landed at St Helena). “This is a great outcome, not only for what we have achieved, but for St Helena as a whole. It is exciting to think where St Helena can go from here.”

General

“The cable has the potential to transform the way we interact, do business, learn, and innovate,” SHG’s Head of Sustainable Development, Damian Burns, said. “In terms of the economy, we are hoping it lowers the costs to do business and lowers transaction costs for businesses, meaning that the private sector can prosper, and generally have an easier business environment. It means new digital and export sectors, and new professional services, all of which have the potential to change the way our economy works. It means greater access to education for young people. In terms of sustainability, it means we can hopefully improve the cost of living – and that means attracting and maintaining skilled people, and getting St Helenians to return home and contribute to the future of this island.”