

Majesty King Tupou VI to officially open Upgraded Foa Causeway

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18 December 2013 : His Majesty, King Tupou VI, will officially open the Upgraded Foa Causeway, which provides the only land transportation link between the island of Foa and the main island of Lifuka in the Ha'apai Group of Islands, on Thursday, 19th December 2013.

The original Foa Causeway was built by New Zealand Army engineers beginning April 1979 and completed in February 1980. Prior to that, travel and trade between the two islands were conducted by boat or on horseback (during low tide). That Causeway had been severely damaged over the years as a result of tropical cyclones and other natural climatic events.

The Upgraded Foa Causeway was made possible through financial assistance from the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany as a result of a debt-swap agreement with the Tonga Government. In 1978 the Tonga Government had received a loan from Germany for the purchase of a regional freighter (the MV Fuakavenga) and a domestic ferry (the MV Obvaha). Under the debt-swap agreement the Tonga Government agreed to use the sum of TOP\$4.67 million it would otherwise have had to repay the German Government to fund a major development project within Tonga. (The Tonga Government was represented at the debt-swap agreement negotiations by the current Governor of the Reserve Bank of Tonga, Sione Ngongo Kioa, when he was still Tonga's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.) In 2009 the two Governments agreed that the debt - swap would be used to upgrade the Foa Causeway and construction began in November 2012.



Picture of Upgraded Foa Causway from Lifuka end

The Upgrading Project was designed by Tahifisi Vehikite of KTEC Consultants who originally managed it as well. Mr. Vehikite re-joined Kramer Ausenco (Tonga) Ltd in June 2013 and that company had managed the project in the last 6 months. The main contractor for the project was China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). The Project Site Supervisor was Manase Lavulavu from the Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI). MOI also provided technical oversight of the project whilst the Ministry of Finance and National Planning had financial oversight. The Ha'apai Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Tu'iha'angana had general oversight of the Project with the assistance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Causeway span is 575m long. The total upgrade work is about 680m long from Lifuka to Foa including the roadworks beyond each approach to the Causeway. The Upgraded Causeway is comprised of two reinforced concrete walls and a tarsealed road between the two walls and three double box culverts (for free flow of water under the Causeway) and two side- bays to allow for give-ways and the passing of vehicles.

The Ceremony of the Official Opening of the Upgraded Foa Causeway will begin at 10.00am on Thursday 19 December with a Thanksgiving Service led by Rev Dr. 'Ahio, President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. The Welcome Remarks will be made by Lord Tu'iha'angana, Governor of Ha'apai and Chairman of the Ha'apai Development Committee followed by remarks by the Lord Prime Minister, Lord Tu'ivakano on behalf of the Tonga Government and by H.E. Mr. Carl Sanft Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Tonga on behalf of the German Government. His Majesty King Tupou VI will then be invited by Lord Tu'atutu, Lord Minister for Health and Deputy Chairman of the Ha'apai Development Committee to officially open the Upgraded Foa Causeway.



Picture of Upgraded Foa Causway from Foa end