

Digicel submarine cable to link Jamaica with Haiti, Bahamas

Digicel has been granted a licence that will allow it to connect undersea fibre cable to neighbouring Haiti and the Bahamas from Jamaica, but the group is still planning the implementation of the project.

The Office of the Utilities Regulations (OUR) in its business plan for 2011-2014 said it had received applications for two submarine cable carrier licences, which were processed and recommendations sent to the Office of the Prime minister.

The OUR did not mention another provider, but said a carrier licence was issued to "Digicel Cable Communications Ltd to construct, own and operate two international submarine cables and associated facilities".

Digicel said it can confirm that the licence was issued but, in a written response to Business Observer queries, added that "We are still in the planning phase and as such, we will not be providing any further information at this point".

Digicel actually attempted being licensed in 2004 before the Government issued a licence to Columbus Communications, which operates in Jamaica as Flow, but was apparently unsuccessful.

Since Flow got its licence, Jamaica's capacity from submarine cable connections increased tremendously.

Columbus inaugurated its submarine cable system that provides connectivity from Kingston to Ocho Rios and Montego Bay in Jamaica, and connects to Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic where the ARCOS network provides seamless connectivity to the United States, since early 2006.

More recently, LIME completed its regional East/West Cable, which links Jamaica to the British Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic which was "designed to provide greater international cable resiliency, meet the expected Internet demand required to support growing customer needs and facilitate the expansion in Internet penetration in the Caribbean region", was completed in mid-January.

Furthermore, earlier this month, LIME landed a submarine cable that links Jamaica to Cuba, as part of a partnership with Telecomunicaciones Gran Caribe (TGC), a joint venture between Cuba (Transbit SA) and Venezuela (Telecom Venezuela).

THE OUR said that it will receive funding from the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) that will provide "technical assistance to develop a regulatory framework for international submarine landing stations and cable facilities and other associated international facilities".

The project has been extended to June 2011.

