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Onehunga – don't let the opportunity be squandered

BY JIM JACKSON, CHAIRMAN, MANUKAU HARBOUR RESTORATION SOCIETY INC

The historic Port of Onehunga is strategic to Auckland. It is the only port that provides a safe haven for vessels operating along the West Coast coastline of the North Island – which stretches some 600km between Cape Reinga and New Plymouth.

The Port of Onehunga is extremely important – not only to Auckland, but to New Zealand – ensuring substantial fish catches are safely landed from the important West Coast fishery.

Unfortunately, its importance appears not to be fully understood nor appreciated by Auckland Council. The council's much-publicised Auckland Unitary Plan has overlooked the need to enable sensible redevelopment of the port which would enhance existing fishing industry operations, let alone its next 30 years of operation.

Onehunga Port forms a critical component in the nation's food supply chain, and is important for servicing our export markets. But equally, as New Zealand's second largest harbour, the port has a role in servicing the communities around its 460km of shoreline. There's also huge potential to provide recreational opportunities as more pressure is applied to the Waitemata Harbour and as Auckland population continues to grow.

Pacifica Shipping and Holcim Cement no longer call at the Port of Onehunga. Their departure opens up opportunities for the fishing industry. There's also the potential for a public ferry service on the harbour – initially connecting Onehunga to Clarks Beach and the Awhitu Peninsula – and tourism opportunities to educate the public and visitors about the area's early history the marine life that exists around the harbour.

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) is apparently in final negotiations to purchase the Port of Onehunga from Ports of Auckland Ltd for an undisclosed amount. When finalised, this transaction will allow NZTA's controversial East West Rounding link to permanently acquire a significant amount of valuable land from the port on which to build a roadway. This will further reduce the already-compromised port area.

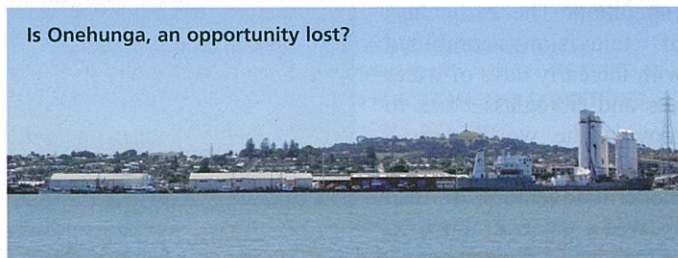
For its part, NZTA intends to occupy the port for construction purposes over the next five years as they construct the \$1.8b East West Link, but at this stage NZTA is not making any attempt to address the serious sediment build-up in the fishing boat basin. This disadvantages long term redevelopment of the Manukau Harbour. To our distress, NZTA is also not presently articulating how the existing fishing operations will be enabled during the five year construction roading programme.

In our view, the Port of Onehunga should be redeveloped as a facility that services the Manukau Harbour, the west coast fishery, a public ferry service, small marina to service Coastguard, Harbourmaster, Fisheries protection and private vessels. It should also provide safe, wave-protected berthage with appropriate water depth at all berths and haul-out facilities for all vessels operating within the harbour and along the west coast.

The Port of Onehunga is not suitable for a series of high rise apartments as proposed by Panuku, the property arm of Auckland Council.


Our community would welcome a more comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of the port *based on the marine*

Is Onehunga, an opportunity lost?



industry as its core focus.

The redeveloped port facility must include maintenance facilities, marine education and administration facilities to service the wider marine industry, with the inclusion of a wet fish market, a café and maybe a place to recognise our long maritime history and the importance of Onehunga in the very early development of Auckland.

Perhaps the leaders in the fishing industry such as Sanford and Moana New Zealand could become the major anchor tenants at the port? It could become the showpiece of best practice, displaying how a highly compromised area can be developed which bring prosperity to all sections of our society. 



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