



## **The future of communal use of the old fishery area in Virtsu**

The following is a summary of the vision of the communal use of the old Virtsu fishery area (renamed to Virtsu Fish Factory Center), which has been prepared within the local community through visioning process in December 2021 – January 2022. This process was part of Virtsu Smart Village activities and was funded partially by European Commission SmartRural21 program. This vision is in sync with the plans of the current private owner of the property - K.MET AS (custom made wire products manufacturer). This document describes current situation and plans, in which the owners of K.MET see the most promising development for their company on the Virtsu fishery property and what opportunities the local community will have of using this area, in addition to gaining new jobs in companies starting to operate there (potential 150-200 jobs).

### **Views of the property owners**

Main owners (private persons) of K.MET are residents of Virtsu, i.e. also part of the local community and thus have actively participated in its activities many years. They are ready to provide the plot of land to the community approach and use on the territory of the old fishery in Virtsu, now owned by them. As a large rural enterprise inevitably has also a local social function, they are happy to contribute not only to the development of their business, but also to the development of their home village and the creation of jobs for the local community. Therefore, moving K.MET from Kõmsi village (10 km away) to Virtsu is a matter of their heart. The process of moving production site from Kõmsi to Virtsu has already started, and is scheduled to finish during 2023.

The owners of K.MET were planning to establish the production of K.MET in Virtsu, as a more promising and larger settlement, from the very beginning, but did not find suitable premises in Virtsu before now. Attempts to purchase various vacated production buildings and sites in Virtsu were made already in 1995 and 2004, though unsuccessfully. The owners of K.MET initiated the Virtsu business center plans on a wasteland in the middle of Virtsu borough in 2011. Unfortunately, in past 10 years, these plans did not materialise, due to the opposition of a certain group of local residents and also low support of the municipality. Finally, as owners of K.MET's described it, they felt exhausted of fighting with the "windmills". At the same time, the old fishery area and buildings were standing unused and for sale. Price of these had fallen over the years, while the value of old "foundations" and "house boxes" had risen due to rising construction prices.

The "Virtsu Smart Village Strategy for 2021-2030", compiled by the local community at the end of 2020, highlights the launch of Virtsu new business center as one of the largest and most effective ventures. It considered the relaunch of the old fishing territory to be very important to local community. This strategy was also a last trigger for the owners of K.MET to fulfill their desire to acquire the area of the old fish factory and allow these two strategic goals of the community to be realised together. Equally important point for them, that since this is a former large-scale industrial area, there is already a high-capacity electric power available vital to the K.MET works.

According to the construction experts, the load-bearing structures of most of the old buildings on the territory of the fishery have been preserved in a satisfactory condition, and it is possible to adapt these to modern buildings for production, business and public services. The largest building in the territory, fish canning workshop, can be easily expanded to the sides and provide a production hall of up to 6000 m<sup>2</sup>, which is just right for satisfying the long-term needs of K.MET manufacturing requirements. The necessary office and support rooms can also be re-vitalised. Although these buildings look currently rotten and wretched, their walls and roofs are still usable. There is a lot of waste (including environmentally hazardous ones) and rubbish on the site and in the buildings, removal of which was the main activity on the territory in 2021 and will remain throughout 2022. K.MET hopes to move into this new production building in the spring of 2023.

In addition, the property has a number of other buildings. Some of them are in a pretty good condition, and which will definitely find a purpose in cooperation with other entrepreneurs, local municipality and the community.

Of the entire 8.5 hectares area of the plot, only about 1.5 hectares are required for K.MET for its production and

operations. Another part of the plot up to 1.5 ha will be open for public use. The owners of K.MET plan to sell the rest of the land to those who are ready to develop their activities there. In this way, K.MET will also partially recover the investment, spent on the purchase of the property, planning and cleaning.

### **History of Virtsu fish factory**

The prehistory of the Virtsu fish factory dates back to 1944, when a fish reception point from the fishermen of the Baltic Sea was established in Virtsu, located in the former warehouse of Virtsu manor. In 1949, however, the construction of the fish factory's production building began in a current location, which at that time was only a narrow higher strip of coastline bounding the small old sea bay. On the basis of the organization of the fish reception point, Virtsu Fish Factory was established as a state owned fish processing company.



In the following years of operation, it became clear that if more production was to be made, production would have to be expanded and equipment upgraded. However, during the Soviet regime, it was practically impossible to buy new equipment, so an experimental equipment workshop was set up, where engineer-level local metal workers began to build the necessary equipment themselves.

In addition, there were several branches of the local fisherman's collective farm on the territory of the fish factory: cannery with laboratory, tin workshop, fish gutting plant, products warehouse, boiler house, cold storage, construction department and lumber workshop. Also a waste water bio-treatment plant was built on the territory.

In 2000, when the Virtsu Fish Factory ceased operations due to bankruptcy (orders from Russia stopped), the largest fish industry in Pärnu city (AS Maseko) became the new owner of the factory, hoping to restart its operations. Unfortunately, the whole Estonian fishing industry was undergoing major changes at the time, with less local fish available and increased supply of imported fishes. During the last 20 years, the operations in the Virtsu fish factory area has been minimal, mainly in the cold storage of frozen fish in small batches. Other buildings were unused, unmaintained and partially demolished.

### **Description of the current situation of the old fish factory**

The area of the fish factory is located in Pärnu county, Lääneranna municipality, Virtsu town. In the area between the Risti-Virtsu state highway and the Great Strait. The area of the plot is 85,692 m<sup>2</sup> and the address is Tallinn road 31 (cadastral code of the land unit 43001: 001: 0884). The plot is marked on the areal photo with red.



The land plot has many buildings and equipped with old utility networks. The area has predominantly flat terrain. There are existing dilapidated access roads between the buildings. Vegetation is minimal, mainly grasslands. The height of the ground above sea level is between 1.8 and 3.3 m, with a slope towards the sea. There is a high metal net fence along the border of the land unit. The land plot borders with various other land units, which purpose are landfill, commercial land, production land, residential land, roads. From the west side the border is sea and there is a wharf of Virtsu old port.

According to the building register, the land unit has the following buildings (land area under the building is in brackets):

1. cannery (5,897 m<sup>2</sup>)
  2. cold storage (2,217 m<sup>2</sup>)
  3. tin workshop (1,783 m<sup>2</sup>)
  4. salting plant (1,328 m<sup>2</sup>)
  5. fish preparing workshop (1,074 m<sup>2</sup>)
  6. boiler house (1,147 m<sup>2</sup>)
  7. cinema arch hall (791 m<sup>2</sup>)
  8. experimental workshop (715 m<sup>2</sup>)
  9. warehouse arch hall (452 m<sup>2</sup>)
  10. office building (302 m<sup>2</sup>)
  11. garage (175 m<sup>2</sup>)
  12. blower building (121 m<sup>2</sup>)
  13. salt storage (77 m<sup>2</sup>)
  14. gate building (64 m<sup>2</sup>)
  15. water pump houses (112 m<sup>2</sup> /87 m<sup>2</sup>)
  16. pumping station (47 m<sup>2</sup>)
  17. water tower (20 m<sup>2</sup>)
  18. compressor building (24 m<sup>2</sup>)
  19. fuel pumping stations (80 m<sup>2</sup> and 40 m<sup>2</sup>)
  20. cooling water pumping station (83 m<sup>2</sup>)
- Total area under the buildings: 16,636 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 20% of the land)



According to the Estonian Land Board, restrictions on this land plot are caused by the geological survey area, repeated flooding area, waterfront shoreline and shore water protection zone, shore, shore construction exclusion and protection zone and protection areas of roads and infrastructure (water pipelines, sewerage pipelines, rainwater pipelines, electric cable lines and 3 power substations). On the sea side the land unit borders with Väänameri sea conservation area, *Natura 2000* bird area and nature reserve area. As no activities are planned for the marine area, there is no expected direct impact on these conservation areas.

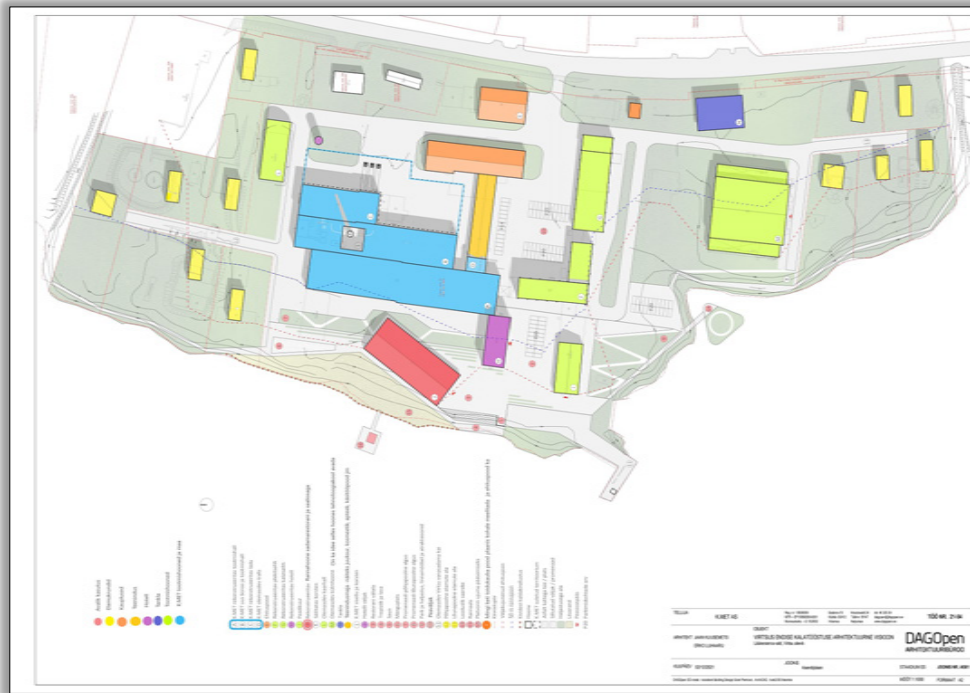
### Description of the plan of the new Virtsu Fish Factory Center

The current landowner plans to cut the land unit to the new plots as follows: 8 plots for production buildings and warehouses, 2 plots for commercial and service buildings, 1 plot for accommodation building, 11 plots for residential (single or semi-detached houses) and plots for a tourist facility, beach building and boat harbor. The plots would be connected with the roads (1 km in total) and there is also a plot for parking planned. This land unit plotting plan is indicative and may of course change during the official planning process, which is primarily needed due to the of efficient land use management requirement. The final zoning and assignment of the land plots will be determined through a detailed planning process, that takes into account the views of the potential new landowners, Lääneranna Rural Municipality Government and the business needs of the local area and the living arrangements of the residents. The allocation of building areas and building rights to emerging plots gives the owners the right for renovation and construction of buildings, with roads and utility networks to serve them. These new plots can then be sold to various interested parties. A couple of manufacturing companies, a hotelier, a building materials store, a pharmacy and a larger supermarket company have already expressed interest in acquiring the plots / buildings in the Fish Factory Center.

It is planned to reserve both end areas of the land unit for residential buildings (11 plots), because there is a

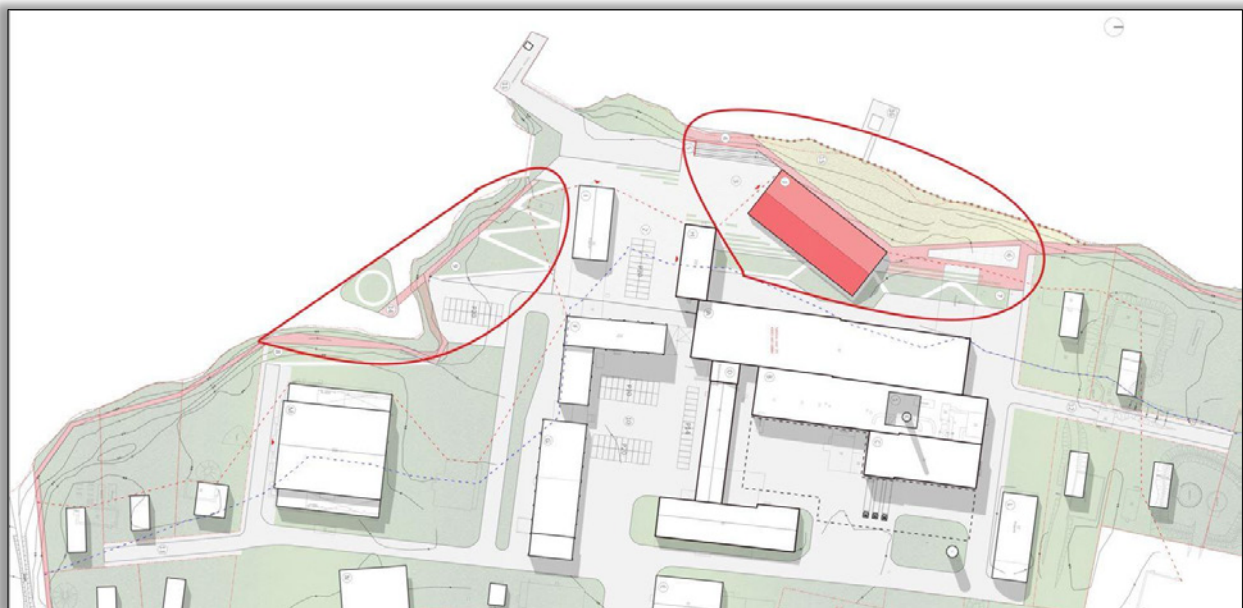


shortage of living space in Virtsu. The uniquely located seaside residential plots, with sunset views, could attract more wealthy residents to Virtsu, who would hopefully in turn become also contributors to the local community. Residents of these houses will also be provided with a boat place by the quay and winter storage of their boats in the boat shed.



## Vision for the use of public areas and buildings

The common vision and desire of the land owners and the local community is that the area adjacent to the sea of the Virtsu Fish Factory Center will be dedicated and designed as public areas (marked with red). Ideas and proposals for the public area use were gathered during public meeting on January 29, 2022.



The proposed plan is to build a light-duty sidewalk (length 750 m) that runs through the entire property by the seaside. It would also lay the foundation for a beach promenade that in future, would run up to the Old Town / Fortress of Virtsu. It would be equipped with seating areas, sandy beach with a swimming bridge, playground and recreational facilities in the park corner, to would make the area more attractive for the locals and tourists.

As part of the visioning process, it was also found that the building closest the beach area, the former fish salting workshop, could be transformed into a Beach House for community and public use. The area of this single building is 1,400 m<sup>2</sup>. It looks rusty at the moment, but the constructions have been assessed by

specialists as satisfactory and the building as a whole can be renovated. According to the current agreement among locals, the building could hold under the same roof a local market area, restaurant/pub, sauna and a large multi-functional hall (about 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>), which has good acoustics for concerts, as was tested already in December 2021. The use and management of this building could be done by the local community organisation which needs to be established by local activists, or under the umbrella of Virtsu Development Association.



In addition to the beach house and the promenade, sandy beach and a small islet, accessible by a beautiful bridge, locals have expressed an idea that a bird-watching tower could be erected on this islet and/or on top of the existing water tower, which would also be an attraction for tourists. A separate and high attraction is the stone chimney of the former boiler house, for which finding a new possibility to use and exhibit gives to the new Virtsu center an opportunity to be seen even from the distance.

Through the old port, it would also be possible to establish a boat connection with the Virtsu Ferry Port and

the Old Town Port and it offers opportunities for the development of water sports.

And, of course, the community has the opportunity to use also other buildings if interested (possibilities for preliminary agreements with the future owners of these plots/buildings), for example to set up a small craft/repair workshop, communal equipment rental and storage, sports/cultural establishments and any other ideas the community would have and presented also in the Virtsu Smart Village strategy action plan.

Recent meetings between K.MET owners and Virtsu locals have indicated strong communal interest in coordinated and cooperational development of the area, that has potential to become a star attraction not only for Virtsu, but also for the entire Lääneranna municipality. Proximity to one of Estonia's most important harbours, being next to state highway, and also a second largest town/ borough in Lääneranna municipality, the locals' urge to remake the old Fishery is only logical.





### **Necessary activities for the commissioning of the property**

At present, the entire land plot is designated as land for manufacturing purpose with a current official detailed plan. A new detailed plan must be prepared for the property in order to develop on the area various industrial, business, public services and social activities. K.MET has launched the process of initiating detailed planning in cooperation with the architects from DAGOpen, who helped also in preparation of the vision pictures and plans presented herein, on the web site of Virtsu Development Association, and also hanged up as big banners visible locations of Virtsu. The preparation of the detailed plan is organized by the Lääneranna Rural Municipality Government in accordance with the Planning Act of Estonia. The new detailed plan will be the basis for future development and construction activities on the entire property. It also will provide the basis for the best possible location of the proposed buildings and infrastructure, in accordance with official constraints and taking into account the environmental burden, as well local economic and public interests.

This detailed plan which will be prepared in 2022, will create the necessary conditions for the realization of two major goals in Virtsu development strategy within the next 5-7 years. When it is completed and the plots are fixed, then the ball will be in the hands of the local people – which is the aim of both K.MET owners and Virtsu Development Association. Therefore, the local community should prepare in the near future plans on whether and how to undertake the acquisition, renovation/construction arrangements, and management of the public area and the beach house in the Virtsu Fish Factory Center. In addition to the purchase of the plot from the current owners, the initial renovation of the beach house would cost up to 150,000 euros. The administrative burden of the public area can hopefully be shared with Lääneranna municipality in the future, but the Virtsu community will hardly receive financial support from there. Thus, the community needs to find both the funding and the governance model to operate, which were also identified in the smart village strategy as another goal of sustainable life in Virtsu.

Community work is already planned for the next step in the spring to clean up the area around a possible future beach house. In the process, further plans and decisions can be prepared.

### **Additional focus: renewable energy generation at the Fish Factory Center**

As K.MET production plant will move to the Fish Factory Center, there will be a great need for electricity (currently 520 kW, but up to 800 kW in the planned future). It is possible to be fully satisfied with the consumption from the electric grid, because there is a substation with a separate 10kV power line directly from a 110kV substation located 500 m away. However, given the principles of environmental and economic sustainability, on-site renewable energy production may be a prudent use. In accordance to K.MET investment plans, and



also in line with “Virtsu Smart Village Strategy for 2021-2030”, K.MET itself is planning a solar power plant on the roof of the production building, but it would not meet all the power needs of them even in the summer sunshine. Thus, it would be possible for others (businesses and community) to produce electricity from the sun also on the other buildings roofs and potentially find a suitable wind generator solution, to use the wind for energy as well. A total of 2.2 MW of electricity capacity from the grid is currently available at the Fish Factory Center, of which K.MET perspective consumption of 0.8 MW would be only 36%.

**A one of the owners of K.MET said:**

**“Today it is still just a beautiful dream, and the dingy fish factory in the pictures is still a harsh reality. But looking back in history, Virtsu has been sent so many valuable times. The fish factory is no longer as insanely ugly as it was a year ago.”**

**Let's dream and act!**

