

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tāwhaki aerospace venture takes another step into space

Today's announcement of new government funding for aerospace infrastructure signals a major step forward for indigenous-lead aerospace venture, Tāwhaki, and the country's growing aerospace sector.

A \$5.4m grant from the Kānoa Regional Strategic Partnership Fund will enable a new 1-kilometre runway and hangar facilities to be added to existing facilities at the Tāwhaki Aerospace Centre to meet urgent local and growing international demand.

The site at Kaitorete, 50 minutes' drive from Ōtautahi Christchurch CBD, is already host to multiple users testing advanced aviation and technologies. Increasing the facility offerings will enable new crafts and companies from here and abroad to take flight and gain access to space.

Supporting aerospace and tech sector growth with this investment is predicted to provide over 1,300 highly skilled, high-paying jobs and up to \$2.4bn in economic benefits over the next 10 years.

Tāwhaki Board Member David Perenara-O'Connell welcomed the government's backing in the joint venture between Kaitorete mana whenua – Te Taumutu Rūnanga and Wairewa Rūnanga – and the Crown.

"Our partnership between mana whenua and the Crown, and our weaving together of mātauranga Māori and cutting edge innovation in aerospace and environmental rejuvenation, is world-leading and unique.

"The companies we can support and the data and insights the technology can deliver with this new infrastructure have the potential to make a global impact. Building that capability here at Kaitorete means we can retain the benefits for our people, region and country."

Perenara-O'Connell said Tāwhaki is taking a phased approach to its developments.

"We want to create enduring opportunities for Kaitorete, our region and for Aotearoa so our communities and whenua flourish for generations to come. We are assessing future requirements and will be working closely with our hapū and communities to carefully work through opportunities that will sustain growth over time."

Tāwhaki Chief Executive Linda Falwasser said the new investment to scale up its facilities will place Aotearoa more firmly on the world aerospace map.

"We have one of the world's best locations to take flight, to launch and discover new horizons at Kaitorete. Its 25 kilometres of expansive land is flanked by the Pacific Ocean and Te Waihora and it has clear skies and access to a wide range of orbits. The facilities at Kaitorete and the robust regulatory environment our country offers provide an opportunity for testing and developing technologies that will have far-reaching benefits.

"We are already fielding interest from international companies who are excited by our kaupapa and values-led approach. We're absolutely thrilled that this new infrastructure means our local aerospace innovators can continue their rapid growth and technology development onshore and will support attracting new business to Aotearoa.

"Globally we are facing some big challenges. We are excited to work with innovators and the research and science communities as they develop new methods of environmental monitoring, weather and disaster forecasting, precision agricultural, sustainable space transportation and beyond."

Ōtautahi is fast becoming the centre for aerospace in Aotearoa with its world-class universities, highly skilled workforce, advanced manufacturing capabilities, international air and seaport and the lifestyle benefits of a modern, attractive city.

Ms Falwasser believes this will accelerate with today's announcement and said Tāwhaki is focused on working with partners to create education to employment pathways and highly skilled jobs for its local communities.

"Ensuring our young ones can see themselves in an exciting, growing sector and that these opportunities are developed with rangatahi for rangatahi is a critical cornerstone to our work programme and partnerships."

Among the companies looking to grow their technology and impact with Tāwhaki are the following based in Ōtautahi.

Dawn Aerospace is looking to use the new runway for horizontal launch of its MK-II Aurora spaceplane, which has the potential to revolutionise the economics of space access.

Dawn Aerospace Co-Founder James Powell said, “We are grateful to the people of Wairewa and Te Taumutu for their support of the aerospace sector. Facilities like this can be hugely transformative and enabling for emerging companies and research entities, and we see Tāwhaki's environment and people-led approach as having broader benefit to Ōtautahi and Kiwis.”

Kea Aerospace CEO Mark Rocket said of the announcement, “This is great news for Kea Aerospace and for Aotearoa. Having the facilities to flight test our technology locally, with a values-lead organisation looking to have a positive impact on the environment, aligns perfectly with our aspirations.”

Aerosearch Co-Founder Robert De Roo said, “We scoured the country for the best place to develop our prototypes and Kaitorete was far and away the best. We're excited to continue the development of our machines and operating systems with the new facilities.”

The new runway and hangar facilities will be added to existing grass airstrips, drone areas and office facilities at the Tāwhaki Aerospace Centre, the first facility of its kind in Aotearoa.

Construction for the runway is due to start immediately and will be completed this summer.

-ENDS-

MEDIA KIT

For downloadable images and video contact info@tawhaki.co.nz

NOTE TO EDITORS:

- Established on 26 May 2021, [Tāwhaki](#) is a unique joint venture partnership between Kaitorete mana whenua – Te Taumutu Rūnanga and Wairewa Rūnanga – and the Crown.
- In 2022, Tāwhaki established the country's first and only multi-use Aerospace Centre at Kaitorete.
- **Dawn Aerospace** is a values-driven space transportation company and the leading supplier of green-propulsion systems for various classes of satellites. These systems utilise safe, accessible propellants and have flown on SpaceX, Vega and Soyuz rockets.
- **Kea Aerospace** is building solar-powered aircraft that will fly in the stratosphere continuously for months at a time. With an earth observation focus, they will provide commercial, humanitarian, environmental and government entities with high-resolution data much more frequently than what is currently available.
- **Aerosearch** is developing a range of remotely piloted aircraft systems capable of long-range flights in extreme weather and at high speeds. In the future, these craft could be used for maritime patrolling, surveying and climate change research.

CONTACT:

Renee Parsons – Tāwhaki Communications Manager

021 026 00229

info@tawhaki.co.nz