



## MEDIA RELEASE

FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2024

### **Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre provides mission-critical boost for aerospace sector**

**CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND** – Aotearoa has reinforced its place in the global aerospace industry with the opening of the [Tāwhaki](#) National Aerospace Centre and new sealed runway at Kaitorete, today.

The new infrastructure coupled with technical support will super charge Aotearoa’s fast-growing aerospace sector and help meet international demand.

Domestic and international companies are already testing and trialling leading-edge technologies at Kaitorete, a short 50-minute drive from Ōtautahi Christchurch CBD.

US-based [Wisk Aero](#) recently conducted its world-first airspace integration test flights for an uncrewed aircraft from Kaitorete and [Dawn Aerospace](#) and [Kea Aerospace](#) will now be able to conduct horizontal space launches and stratospheric flights from the site.

Aerospace innovation requires significant technological, regulatory and commercial effort. Support to traverse this and ensure a safe and sustainable industry is paramount. The creation of innovation centres such as Tāwhaki follows international best practise to advance growing sectors.

The new 1-kilometre runway and planned hangar facilities were funded by a \$5.4 million grant from the New Zealand Government’s Regional Strategic Partnership Fund, administered by Kānoa. This is forecast to enable aerospace and tech sector growth that delivers over 1,300 high value, high wage jobs, and up to \$2.4 billion in economic benefits over the next 10 years.

Tāwhaki Board Member David Perenara-O’Connell said mana whenua (indigenous people) of Kaitorete were proud to be at the forefront of supporting the country’s aerospace sector and acknowledged their partnership with the New Zealand Government in the Tāwhaki Joint Venture.

“To fully enable the sector, supply chains and realise the economic benefits for all New Zealanders, takes a collaborative approach. We’re grateful for the support of our government, local authorities, regulators, aerospace partners, research and science communities, and suppliers who share our vision of a world-leading hub for innovation and exploration.

“We believe that this mission is truly unique. The way in which we weave together mātauranga Māori (indigenous knowledge) with cutting-edge innovation in aerospace and environmental rejuvenation, marks a new era in sustainable land use.”

Aotearoa is one of the top countries for space launches and aerospace testing and trialling, with an advanced and responsive regulatory environment, sparse population and low air and sea traffic.

Kaitorete offers clear skies and access to a wide range of orbits from an expansive, unpopulated,

flat strip of land 25km long, nestled between Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) and the Pacific Ocean. Its proximity to world-class universities, international air and seaports and advanced manufacturing capabilities in nearby Ōtautahi Christchurch is globally unique.

Tāwhaki Chief Executive Linda Falwasser said the Joint Venture was taking a staged approach to its developments, with the potential to support vertical space launch in future.

“We have one of the world’s best locations for aerospace and space launch and we’re prioritising critical infrastructure alongside rejuvenation of this special whenua (land). This includes exploring solar power and green hydrogen production and storage.

“The research, science and innovation we can host will help ensure Kaitorete flourishes for generations to come. Aotearoa and the world will benefit from the discoveries here, with operators developing new methods and technologies for environmental monitoring, weather and disaster forecasting, precision agriculture, sustainable space transport and beyond,” said Ms Falwasser.

“We have received strong global demand for a site that delivers technically while holding steadfastly to its values of protecting and preserving our people and planet.”

“Having this key infrastructure so accessible is hugely enabling for the whole sector,” said Dawn Aerospace Co-Founder James Powell. “It will be transformative to the development of our rocket-powered aircraft, the Mk-II Aurora.”

Kea Aerospace CEO Mark Rocket said Tāwhaki is enabling an exciting future for the region and the country.

“Kaitorete is situated in an ideal location for aerospace research and development, and offers Kea Aerospace unique opportunities for flight testing and operations of our solar-powered stratospheric aircraft.”

Professor Peter Gostomski, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research at Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC) said: “The opening of Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre allows our region to lead the way in the aerospace sector in Aotearoa, and for the University of Canterbury to play our part in achieving that.

“For our University to have access to an aerospace research facility right on our doorstep offers an exceptional opportunity for students studying Aerospace Engineering and other related disciplines. Not only to develop unique skills and apply their knowledge but to work in this industry within our region. We’re excited to see continued growth and investment in this sector and envision a future where Waitaha Canterbury stands as a leader in aerospace innovation.”

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