

MEDIA | RELEASE

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Christchurch Airport unveils new long-term proposal for mid to lower South Island

Christchurch Airport is about to begin discussions on the potential of building a world-class sustainable airport on 750 hectares of land near Tarras in Central Otago.

Chief Executive Malcolm Johns says the concept would deliver widespread social and economic benefits to regions across the South Island.

"We've been creating social and economic outcomes for the South Island for generations. We now want to use our experience to ensure the South Island is well-positioned to take advantage of future aviation trends and remain well-connected to the rest of the world."

Malcolm Johns says the airport team is pleased to have secured the land so it can begin discussions about its long-term thinking.

"Our top priority is a conversation with the people who live closest to the site – the Tarras community. This is their home and it's important they are given the opportunity to ask us their questions directly and understand our thinking."

He says the airport had planned to announce the proposal next week when he and other members of the project team will be in Central Otago.

"We've had to announce this early after a media inquiry. But our message to Tarras is we look forward to meeting you – we will sincerely listen to understand your ideas and concerns and we will factor your information into our thinking. We know airports work best alongside communities not on top of them."

Malcolm Johns says the project team will consult with people across the South Island.

"South Islanders are great at rolling up their sleeves and working together to get things done. We want to hear from those with ideas and feedback as we further investigate the feasibility of the project and shape its design.

"We have a lot of work to do, but our current concept is to start with a 2.2-kilometre, jet capable runway. Building from scratch would enable us to design and build one of the world's most sustainable airports. Our plan is to build in modules so we can start small and grow to meet any future need."

Malcolm Johns says \$45 million has been spent on the project so far – which includes purchasing the land bordered by State Highway 8 and 8A.

"The expenditure was budgeted and will not impact on Christchurch Airport's operational dividends to shareholders."

Mr Johns says Christchurch Airport has long seen the potential for a new airport in Central Otago.

"We're an intergenerational company that has long seen the potential of a new airport in Central Otago. This would be make a real difference to future generations of South Islanders.

"This site is close to existing infrastructure and is easily accessible for a number of regions. Its topography would enable airlines to use their most sustainable aircraft.

“We’ll take a long-term approach and match our pace to both the growth in aviation and the needs of these communities and regions. We have the experience to ensure any new airport would be economically sound, enable jobs and meet the environmental and connectivity needs of the future.”

Malcolm Johns says Christchurch Airport started working on the proposal before COVID19 disrupted air travel globally.

“The virus doesn’t change too much of this proposal – except for timeframes. We are confident the central and southern South Island will always be a place where people seek to live, visit and work. We can now look beyond the status quo to talk about and plan for that future.

“This is an opportunity for all South Islanders to work together on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a piece of vital infrastructure, that is one of the most sustainable airports in the world and able to make a real difference for future generations.”

For further comment, please contact:

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About Christchurch Airport

Christchurch Airport is the international gateway to the South Island, with our airline partners ensuring travellers can get anywhere in the world by leaving from here on an international flight. The airport is a major driver of the South Island regional economy, and is one of the partners in the SOUTH initiative, which sees all 13 regional tourism organisations working collegially to promote the South Island.

Christchurch Airport has been named by travellers as one of the world’s best airports and is consistently rated by an independent international quarterly travellers’ survey as the best airport in Australia and New Zealand.

Christchurch Airport is owned 75% by Christchurch City Holdings Limited and 25% by the Crown.

Visit christchurchairport.co.nz for more information.