



Airport plans for future runway extension

Nelson Airport is beginning a community conversation as it plans for a runway extension needed to better cater for existing aircraft, improve safety, and provide for future low-emission flights.

The airport has signalled the need for a longer runway for many years through its annual reports, master plan and other public documents. While the development is still 10-15 years away, planning needs to begin in earnest now to give the airport, its neighbours and the wider Nelson community certainty for the future.

Airport chief executive Mark Thompson says the current 1347m runway is one of the shortest in the world servicing the type of aircraft that travel to and from Nelson.

“That has limited the weight – in both passenger numbers and freight – that airlines can carry when they come into Nelson, particularly in certain weather conditions. That obviously has an impact on the viability of flying in and out of Nelson for our operators.”

In addition, the runway may be too short to cater for the type of low-emission aircraft operators will transition to as the air industry works towards a more environmentally-sustainable future.

Mark says extending the runway to 1510m will allow the airport to remove the current weight restrictions, cater for future low-emissions planes and meet the highest international safety standards with the introduction of obstacle-free buffer zones at each end of the runway (known as Runway End Safety Areas or RESA).

“The airport is a really vital piece of infrastructure for our region. We need to ensure we can meet the needs of our community now and in the future to play our part in supporting a vibrant, flourishing Nelson-Tasman.”

To enable the runway extension and future airport operations, the airport will be asking the Nelson City Council to amend its planning provisions for the airport. The changes would enable and protect future airport operations while managing its effects, including controls on airport noise.

“Before we start any formal process with the Council though, we’ll be sharing all this information with our neighbours who may be affected by these future changes. This is just the start of a conversation that we’ll be having with the community about our proposals. Once we submit our request to the Council, there will also be formal avenues for people to make submissions, but in the meantime we’re very open to answering questions and taking any feedback that people wish to share.

The airport has written to everyone who may be affected by the proposed updated noise provisions and invited residents to an information drop-in session at the Honest Lawyer on 12 May.

More information is available on the airport’s website, at nelsonairport.co.nz/ourfuture.

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