

TIAKI IN KIRIKIROA

Hamilton Airport

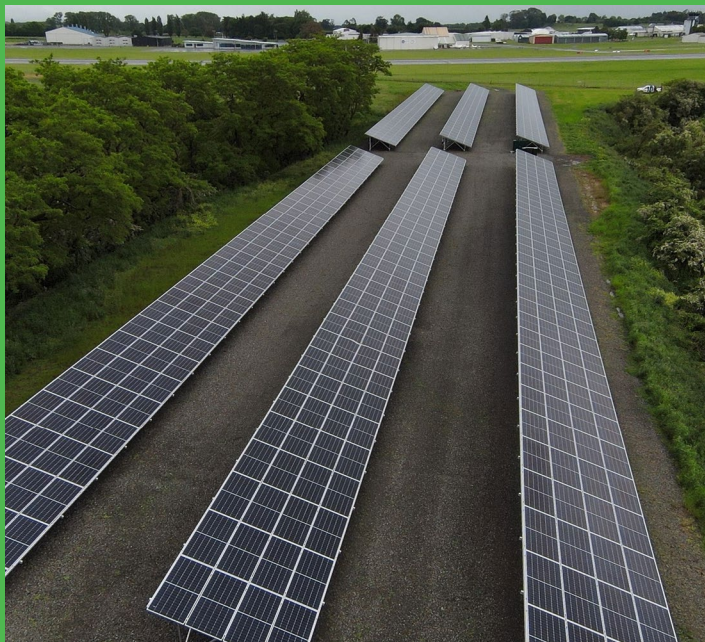
Providing a uniquely Waikato welcome

As visitors and returning locals walk off their flights and into Hamilton Airport, they pass through an arrival corridor adorned with hand-woven flax panel ceilings, known as Tuurapa, to evoke a sense of welcome, comfort and respect.

Works by local Māori artists draw the eye, green-hued carpet on the ground floor and blue-tinged carpet upstairs allude to the earth mother and sky father of Māori legend - Papatūānuku and Ranginui – and notches in the ceiling represent roosting nests for Waikato and New Zealand's only endemic land mammal, the pekapeka (long-tailed bat).

“The airport is a gateway for manuhiri (visitors) coming to our city and region and it’s important to us they receive a uniquely Waikato welcome, rich in storytelling about our part of Aotearoa,”

says Mark Morgan, the Airport’s Group Chief Executive.



“We are committed to the long-term good of our environment, living by the principles of guardianship (kaitiakitanga) and sustainability as core team values and strategic themes. We align ourselves with the Tiaki Promise, which is an acknowledgement of the special connection we hold with the land we come from and our duty of care to protect that.”

More than 800,000 people engage with the airport every year, so providing them with a welcome that is both informative and moving helps instil a sense of pride in where they are in the world, Mark says.

“Tiaki for us is protection of people, place and culture – within our team and across the region. It’s a fundamental basis for all our sustainability work and we embed the values of the Tiaki Promise into everything we do.”

Looking after the land, communities and visitors is one of the reasons the airport recently installed a \$1.5 million solar farm on-site – the first of its kind at a New Zealand airport.

The 5,000 square-metre operation was switched on at the end of 2023, providing an immediate 25% reduction in the airport’s energy costs and fully powering the refurbished airport terminal during daylight hours. The 860-panel solar farm can generate 460kW of electricity at peak capacity, and there are plans to expand it further in the years ahead.

“HLZERO50 is the airport’s commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We’ve seen a 20 per cent reduction in emissions since 2019 and we’re aiming for a 46 per cent reduction by 2030. We’re on the right track but we don’t underestimate how much more we can and should do.”



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Many other environmentally conscious initiatives can be found throughout the airport too, Mark says. These range from recycling bins and energy efficient lighting to the use of milk delivered in kegs rather than plastic bottles, reducing 700kgs of plastic from the environment each year.

The airports retail store sources products and food locally, where possible, and licence plate recognition technology introduced in the guest car park removed the need for disposable, single-use tickets.

This constellation of efforts has seen Hamilton Airport certified with 'Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 4' by Airports Council International, in recognition of its work in reducing carbon emissions and encouraging third parties to make their own reductions.

Mark says Hamilton Airport is also a member of the New Zealand Airports Association's Sustainability Working Group and works closely with other airports to share knowledge and explore ways to make operations even more sustainable.

"I think as a publicly owned company, we should show some leadership – fiscally, socially and environmentally. Some initiatives like the solar farm will have a financial payback and others will provide different benefits over the long-term," he said.

"Fundamentally, reducing carbon is the right thing to do. We are kaitiaki and we have a responsibility to play our part in protecting our environment for future generations."

Mark says the airport recognises that success in sustainability is much wider than purely reducing carbon emissions and his team are "laser-focused" on identifying opportunities to do better. 45% of the demolition materials from the 2022 airport terminal refurbishment were recycled and

readied for re-use, and the airport is "making every effort" to promote a circular economy and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Hamilton Airport is also an active partner in the Mystery Creek Community Catchment programme, which includes biodiversity projects that aim to make a positive environmental impact on local waterways, restore nearby gulleys, and eradicate pests to safeguard native species.

Sponsorship is another area where the airport makes a considerable contribution, Mark says. Over the past year, sponsorship initiatives have included support for the Phillips Search & Rescue Trust, the popular Balloons Over Waikato festival, and the provision of community access to the airport runway for the Rotary Run the Runway 5K event that raises money for community causes.

"We are lucky here to have the ability to make significant investments. I know that's not the case for everybody but I think if we all implement one or two small actions, collectively this can make a big difference," he says.

"The Tiaki Promise is something we can all support because we should leave our environment and our place better than how we found it."



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