

Marlborough flying high as Aviation Heritage Centre opens

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) chairman Phil Lough today congratulated Marlborough on its vision as he opened the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre near Blenheim.

NZTE in 2004 provided \$2 million in Major Regional Initiative funding to get the project started and a big effort since by the region has resulted in today's official opening of the centre.

The Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre provides a facility for showcasing and maintaining original and replica historic aircraft.

Incorporating flying displays, it is expected to promote tourism in the region by educating people about aviation and also act as a focus for the development of the aviation sector.

Speaking at today's opening, Mr Lough said the people of Marlborough had displayed some innovative thinking and energy to develop the project.

"The original concept of having an aircraft collection to encourage travellers to stop in Marlborough has developed into this internationally-significant centre that will leverage aviation restoration activity, boost tourism and events, and spawn new aviation business," Mr Lough said.

He added the centre would be a catalyst for the region to position itself as an international centre for aviation.

Preparations for an aviation business park alongside the heritage centre are now underway, a move that will help to attract more aviation businesses to the region.

The Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre was the second Marlborough project to receive Major Regional Initiative funding.

The first, a Wine Research Centre, was opened in March 2004.

NZTE's Major Regional Initiative funding is a component of its Regional Partnerships Programme, which helps regions to develop and activate sustainable economic growth strategies.