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Contact partners with CDC to explore data centre development

Contact Energy (Contact) and CDC Data Centres (CDC) have today announced they are working together to explore a potential data centre at Stratford, Taranaki.

Contact and CDC will seek resource consent for a 250 MW data centre¹ to be built near the site of Contact's Taranaki Combined Cycle gas power plant (TCC), retired earlier this year having reached end-of-life. It would be supported by co-located battery storage development.

"It is our intention that electricity for the proposed facility would be supplied under long-term contract, supported by new generation from Contact's 11 TWh pipeline of geothermal, wind and solar development options," said Contact CEO Mike Fuge.

Large-scale, long-term, contracted demand underpins investment in new renewable generation and batteries, rather than relying solely on existing supply.

"Our strategy is to lead New Zealand's renewable energy future. And, as part of that, we are playing our part in the economic regeneration of the regions," said Mr Fuge.

"We believe Stratford shapes as an ideal location to explore a digital hub powered by renewable energy from where the local Taranaki economy can thrive, and the wider energy system and New Zealand can benefit."

Peak construction jobs on the data centre are expected to be comparable to the level seen at Contact's Tauhara geothermal power station, which provided more than 600 jobs in Taupo at its peak. Once operational, around four times as many skilled workers are expected to be on site compared to the former TCC.

As part of the project design process, Contact and CDC are assessing a range of technologies to manage and smooth demand, including solutions that can respond to rapid load changes. The aim is to strengthen system reliability during peak demand and dry-year conditions.

Stratford provides an attractive option for data centre development, with 500 MW of grid-scale batteries already consented and an existing grid connection.² Diverse high-capacity fibre connection is available, both terrestrial and subsea, providing connection to Auckland, the landing point for New Zealand's international fibre cables.

Contact's joint venture with Lightsource bp is also progressing an option for a 150 MWac solar farm with integrated battery storage near the site.³

CDC Founder and CEO Greg Boorer said his company welcomed the opportunity to work with Contact to assess a potential data centre development at Stratford.

"At a time when digital infrastructure is becoming increasingly important to national resilience and economic productivity, we see value in a project shaped by New Zealand's energy capability, significant local ownership and long-term regional participation," said Mr Boorer.

¹ IT / compute load of 250MW. Approximately 350MW total load including ancillary load at peak times (subject to final design).

² Minor substation works required.

³ The solar development option remains subject to resource consent, financing and final investment decisions.

CDC data centres are designed to minimise or eliminate reliance on local water resources. Its fully closed-loop cooling technology recirculates the same water through the facility, rather than drawing continuously from the water network like some overseas data centres. This keeps operational water use exceptionally low. For Stratford, CDC will explore a pathway to a net zero-water-use cooling solution. This will include rainwater collection and reuse in the bespoke design. Where practical, captured water could also support landscaping, biodiversity and community water initiatives.

CDC's New Zealand data centres are Toitū Net Carbon Zero certified, and Toitū Enviromark Diamond certified, recently achieving both certifications for the third consecutive year. Diamond is the highest level within the Toitū Enviromark programme and recognises organisations that have embedded environmental management into the way they operate, make decisions and drive continual improvement.

"Our focus at the moment is on working systematically through the technical, consenting, commercial and stakeholder work required to assess this opportunity. The project would move forward only if it meets all required criteria and CDC's high standards for secure, resilient and responsible digital infrastructure," said Mr Boorer.

The site would bolster CDC data centres' support for customers that deliver essential digital services across government, research, education, disaster recovery, cloud, enterprise and critical infrastructure sectors, where secure, resilient and always-available technology is required.

At this stage, activities are limited to consenting, site and infrastructure design, customer engagement and development planning. Neither party has committed to construct the facility. Development would be subject to securing anchor tenants, obtaining the necessary approvals and securing project finance.⁴

As planning progresses, Contact and CDC will engage proactively with key stakeholders including on project design, infrastructure requirements, environmental considerations and regional benefits. The operation of Contact's existing 200MW generation assets in Stratford is not impacted by this proposal.

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⁴ While still at an early stage, one of a number of pathways that is being progressed for the construction of the proposed data centre would involve an equity investment from Contact alongside CDC and project financing. This would be structured to preserve Contact's balance sheet strength.

About Contact Energy

Contact Energy is leading New Zealand's renewable energy future, operating 37 sites nationwide across geothermal, hydro, battery and thermal assets, and supporting more than 690,000 customer connections across electricity, gas, broadband and mobile.

Contact is building renewable energy infrastructure at pace, committing more than \$2.4 billion over the past five years, including three new geothermal power stations, two grid-scale batteries, and two solar farms. Since 2020, Contact has grown from a \$6 billion to a \$12 billion company, supporting jobs and businesses in almost every region of New Zealand.

About CDC Data Centres

CDC is the largest developer, owner and operator of highly secure, sovereign and interconnected data centre infrastructure across Australia and New Zealand. Its shareholders include Infratil, as well as government organisations such as the Future Fund (Australia's sovereign wealth fund) and Commonwealth Super Corporation. CDC provides the critical infrastructure that underpins government services, national critical infrastructure and the digital economy, where security, availability and resilience are fundamental requirements.

CDC's operations are differentiated by its fully integrated model, with in-house capabilities across site selection, design, construction and operations. This end-to-end approach, developed over more than 19 years, enables consistent delivery of highly secure, large-scale facilities and supports long-term operational performance across the asset lifecycle, reducing execution risk and supporting reliable delivery.

CDC integrates sustainability considerations into the design, construction and operation of its facilities. The company always looks to match electricity consumption with renewable energy, employs advanced closed-loop cooling technology that significantly minimises reliance on water resources, and continues to invest in efficient infrastructure that supports long-term resilience and performance. CDC also works closely with customers, industry partners, governments and local communities throughout the development and operational lifecycle of its facilities, with a focus on transparency, stakeholder engagement and delivering positive economic and community outcomes in the regions where it operates.