

Media release – Wednesday 12 February 2020

Ground to be broken at Otago Radar site next week

MetService will break ground near Lamb Hill, 25 kilometres northwest of Dunedin next week as construction of the Otago weather radar gets under way. The radar is expected to be operational by May 2020.

Since the confirmation of the site location in July 2019, MetService have worked closely with the landowner and council to obtain the required consents for the project. Both building and resource consents submitted for the project have been granted by Dunedin City Council.

Kevin Alder, MetService’s Manager for Meteorological Data Services is pleased with the progress to date. “Building a radar at altitude (750 metres above sea level) has its challenges, but we’ve been delighted by the support we’ve had from the landowner, the local councils, and our contractors.”

Current activities involve establishing electrical and communication services to the site, along with preparations for laying the concrete foundation for the radar tower and two small utility buildings.

The 12-metre radar tower is currently under construction offsite while the radar and radome (the sphere at the top of the tower that contains the radar antenna), are on their final stages of a three-month journey from Finland to Port Chalmers and should arrive early next month.

The final phase in April will involve the assembly of the tower and installation of utility buildings onsite, along with the installation of the radar equipment. Provided no major delays caused by adverse weather, MetService expect to have the radar operable by late May 2020.

Otago Regional Council General Manager Operations, Gavin Palmer, said the Council was pleased that the new radar would soon be in service.

“ORC uses MetService forecasts and data to manage its flood protection schemes, which provide flood protection to 20,000 hectares in Otago including parts of Dunedin. The detail and accuracy that this new radar will provide is really going to assist the work ORC does around weather events and flooding in the coastal parts of the region.”

The location of the radar provides excellent coverage of Dunedin City, the Taieri and Clutha River catchments, and eastern Otago from the Catlins to the Waitaki.

The Otago radar will utilise the latest dual-polarisation technologies to distinguish between different types of precipitation such as rain, hail and snow. This, along with precise estimates of accumulated rainfall derived from the radar data, will help meteorologists, hydrologists and emergency managers better understand weather impacts on communities, river catchments, and infrastructure.

“We understand the importance of this radar, the tenth in our New Zealand network, to equip communities and councils in Otago with timely, accurate information to best prepare them for the effects of adverse weather”, adds Alder.

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Additional information:

The Otago radar is estimated to cost \$2.8 million and will be the tenth in MetService’s national network. As New Zealand’s single authoritative voice for severe weather, MetService’s weather radar network plays an essential role in the delivery of its public-safety services. All New Zealand radar imagery is updated every 7.5 minutes on metservice.com and MetService apps.

Additionally, the radar will allow MetService to provide a severe thunderstorm warning service within the radar coverage area as part of its severe weather warnings and watches programme.