



December 2023

# Northland Rail Programme

Kia ora

Our work repairing the 180km North Auckland Line (NAL) will be picking up pace over the Christmas break with work getting underway on a number of major damage sites.

We have made good progress in recent weeks with repairs completed on close to half the minor-to-moderate damage sites and we have completed the background planning work on the 33 remaining damage sites.

Work on a number of these major sites will be the focus over Christmas.

There is a major fibre optic cable buried in the rail corridor for about 60km between the Tahekeroa area in North Auckland and Maungaturoto. To start using heavy machinery around the cable runs the risk of damaging it – which would affect numerous internet connections in Northland and high value business data coming into New Zealand.

The cable needs to be temporarily moved out of the rail corridor by the provider and it's not likely this work can be completed before Christmas. To avoid potential internet disruption there will likely have to be a pause over the holiday.

Given the amount of rebuild work going on in the North

Island following Cyclone Gabrielle, we are also having to deal with supply constraints on key materials – such as concrete culverts, piles and soil nails (used to stabilise slopes). All of these are needed for our rebuild work.

We were aiming to complete construction work in early 2024 but the cable situation, in particular, is expected to delay our work schedule. We're just working through that and trying to reduce any delay as much as possible. We expect to be able to give more clarity on a reopening date in the New Year.

I want to thank you for your patience.

We need to do this job right and are committed to getting the NAL open so that we can get back to moving rail freight in and out of Northland.

The work we are currently doing, along with the \$50 million worth of additional resilience works funded by the Government, will make sure the NAL can better withstand future weather events and further disruption like this is avoided.

If you have any questions about the work we're doing, please contact us at: [northlandrail@kiwirail.co.nz](mailto:northlandrail@kiwirail.co.nz)

**Eric Hennephof**

Northland Rail Upgrade Programme Director

## Progress repairing the North Auckland Line

There have been more than 200 damage sites along the NAL between Swanson and Whangārei, including overslips, slumps, washouts and underslips.

Work is completed repairing more than 50 kilometres of line north of Swanson (to near Makarau), including repairs to significant washouts in north Auckland.

Repairs have been completed on 40 minor/moderate sites and work continues on another 70 minor/moderate sites. The work is being done by 7 contractors, covering 15 construction packages.



*New culverts, to improve water flows, being installed under the rail line in the Kaipara Flats area.*





*Stabilising mesh being added to a cleared embankment beside the track near Topuni.*



*Another slip being cleared near Topuni.*

The massive Tahekeroa slip, where 35,000 cubic metres of earth fell close to 400 metres across the road and rail line, was completed in September. Two other large slips in the area were also remediated.

Of the 33 remaining major damage sites, geotechnical investigations have been completed, contractors appointed and preferred remediation design options chosen. We expect to carry out significant physical works over the Christmas/New Year period.

A delay in moving the fibre optic cable would hold up work on 18 of the major damage sites.

Some of the slips on the NAL have moved land that is in native bush and some areas of bush will need to be cleared to rebuild the rail line. We have engaged ecologists and erosion/sediment control specialists who are working with our construction teams to safeguard sensitive native flora and fauna. Any areas that need to be cleared will be re-planted, to reinstate habitats, once the rail work has been completed.



*A swale drain being cleared near Maungaturoto.*



*A major damage site near Topuni, which will be worked on over the Christmas break. Land under the rail line has collapsed and the entire 47 metre high slope will need to be retained, along with a new, larger culvert.*







*Upgrades to the Whangārei Rail Yard – old track foundations have been dug out and removed, geo-mesh put down and new rock laid. It is then compacted before the rails and track structures are reinstalled.*

Resilience improvement work on the NAL will be carried out at the same time as the weather damage repairs.

As previously mentioned, we have completed Government funded track replacement and upgrade work between Whangārei and Kauri, which will allow heavier trains to run on the line. While the NAL is closed, we are now taking the opportunity to carry out upgrade work in our Whangārei Rail Yard. Doing this work now means we avoid any further disruption to customers later on.



## Rail Safety

There are currently hi-rail vehicles, diggers and specialist machines moving along the railway tracks to get to worksites – and over the months ahead there will be more activity.

KiwiRail is raising public awareness about this and will be running a series of advertising and social media campaigns.

Given the line has been closed for so long, we are urging people to be extra vigilant and cautious around level crossings.

Our main message to people is to expect trains and rail

vehicles at any time, from either direction.

Other safety messages are:

- If you are in a car, always slow down as you're approaching a level crossing and be prepared to **STOP**
- Look out for rail vehicles or machinery at all times, and obey signs and signals
- Stay off railway tracks and only ever cross the railway at approved level crossings.

We would appreciate anything you could do to share these messages in Northland, to help keep people safe.

