



March 2023

# Northland Rail Programme Newsletter

Kia ora

The extreme weather events in the last few months have unfortunately impacted on our Northland Rail Upgrade. Improvements to the line between Swanson and Whangārei were mostly complete when the downpour on 27 January caused multiple slips and washouts. Further damage happened during Cyclone Gabrielle. This line is an important freight connection for Northland and we are diverting track resources from the rail upgrade north of Whangārei to make repairs and reopen the line as quickly as possible. We remain committed to ensuring better rail freight connections to and within Te Tai Tokerau and ask you to bear with us as we rebuild after these major weather events.

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

## Recent weather impacts on the North Auckland Line

At this stage, the North Auckland Rail line is expected to remain closed for at least 12 weeks.

The combination of the 27 January rains and Cyclone Gabrielle resulted in more than 100 damage sites on the line between Swanson and Whangārei – ranging from fallen trees, slips, and washouts (where the track has been undermined by flood waters).

We've been working hard to clear debris and repair damaged track. While we are making good progress, the ongoing weather recently has hampered the response. For example (see pictures below), the rail near Kaukapakapa was damaged in the 27 January event, with repairs near complete when severe localised rain and flooding hit on 24 February. The new rail and formation (the rock foundation under the track) remained intact, but the unconsolidated ballast was washed away. Further repairs are underway.

There have been at least 50 slips on the line. While we can quickly clear away debris in many, we need to undertake engineering assessments and take steps to ensure there are no further slips in the future. These assessments and response are ongoing.

The biggest issue is a 350m slip at Tahekeroa, between Helensville and Wellsford. In late January this saw more than 35,000 cubic metres come down across a road and the rail line below. Before we could take action, the slip needed to stop moving – which wasn't helped by further rainfall in the following weeks.

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*Tahekeroa Slip – ground level*





*Aerial view of the massive slip in Tahekeroa*

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The slip has been assessed by geo-technical experts and we have now begun enabling works and started to clear material. In the weeks and months ahead we will:

- Build an earth bund above the road, to ensure safety while we clear the majority of the slip.
- Build a permanent, engineered bund to help control any further slips; dig out a catchment area between the road and rail in case earth does go over the bund; and ensure there is excellent drainage in the area to reduce the risk of more slips.

This is a huge slip, which requires a significant engineering response, and it will take time to properly remediate.



*Small slip on the NAL*



*Washout on the NAL*



*Rail damage near Kaukapakapa: track damaged after the 27 January flooding (left); repairs underway (top right); further damage in the 24 February weather event (bottom right).*



## Note to Tahekeroa residents

While we are aiming to deal with as much of the landslide material as possible on site, some will have to be carted to the landfill at Woodhill.

This will lead to increased truck movements on the roads, particularly until the end of March as we create working space on site. Trucks will be operating during day-light hours, so please be

extra vigilant around the roads.

From April it's expected the number of daily truck movements will significantly reduce. However, other construction vehicles and personnel vehicles will also be accessing the site over the coming months, usually in mornings and evenings.