



Northland Rail Programme

May 2023

Kia ora

The late January weather event and Cyclone Gabrielle have resulted in more than 170 damage sites along the rail corridor between Swanson and Whangarei. While we have been working hard on repairs, we have also had ongoing weather to contend with.

We remain committed to reopening the line and have made good progress on repairing around 100 sites. The weather events have caused quite a number of slips – including slips beneath the rail line – that have required geotechnical investigation and will require an engineered rebuild.

This work is more difficult than merely clearing earth from the rail corridor, so unfortunately we no longer expect to be able to reopen the rail line by the end of June.

We appreciate this delay in resuming rail transport to and from Northland is far from ideal, but safety has to be the priority. We expect to have a clearer idea of timeframes next month.

The Government, as part of a pre-Budget 2023 announcement, recently announced up to \$200 million to help rebuild weather damaged rail lines in the North Island. A key focus of this will be making resilience improvements to the lines in Northland and the Hawkes Bay, to ensure the lines can better withstand future weather events and minimise disruption.

If you have any questions about the work we're doing, please contact us at northlandrail@kiwirail.co.nz

Eric Hennephof

Northland Rail Upgrade Programme Director

Progress repairing the North Auckland Line

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

There is a fairly large slip under the rail line (known as an under slip) affecting the tracks near Makarau, which needs to be addressed to get rail to the 35,000 cubic metre slip at Tahekeroa. Geotechnical assessments are completed but design of the engineering response to the Makarau slip is still underway. We are installing a system to monitor earth movement at the site.

At Tahekeroa, the foundations for a temporary earth bund above the road are complete and work is progressing to construct the bund that will protect the downhill works against further movement of the landslip. Earth from the debris flow is being stabilised on site for re-use within the final design.



The rail corridor at Tahekeroa has been cleared and landslip material is being stabilised at a temporary fill on site beside it.

Recent weather has delayed progress on the Tahekeroa slip, with rainfall almost daily over the last fortnight.

This has required ongoing site tidy ups - such as pumping water out of excavations, clearing silt from



Example of an underslip near Tahekeroa



Example of ongoing weather impacts - having to drain water from excavations at Tahekeroa

drains and re-stabilising saturated slip material with lime. There has also been an underslip beside the rail line that will need an engineering response, to ensure safety.

This has resulted in a delay of at least four weeks – with a work train carrying materials to rebuild the rail line now expected to access the site around mid-June.

Between the Tahekeroa and Whangārei areas we have completed detailed assessments of damage sites and categorised those which have significant damage and require detailed and specific engineered solutions; those that are requiring more in depth geo-technical investigation; and those that can likely be repaired with more standard engineering solutions. There are 10 significant slip sites, including a number of underslips

Overall there are more than 30 sites along the NAL that have needed significant geo-technical investigation and will require a detailed engineering response.

Geotech uncovers what is happening below the surface – the investigations capture the damage that cannot be seen from above, other than tell-tale



Example of river scour near Whangārei

signs there is some damage.

The geotechnical investigations are complete but as the reports into each site have been received the actual scale of damage to the line has been revealed. We have begun the process for developing engineering responses for each of those sites, which understandably takes time. Given the number of sites we have

also had to go to market for additional engineering resources.

To get the line open as quickly as possible, we will undertake temporary repairs where it is safe to do so. We are also preparing a work programme so that as soon the detailed engineering designs are done, those repairs can begin immediately.

NZ Upgrade Programme work – Whangārei to Kauri

We have been making good progress renewing and upgrading the line between Whangārei and Kauri, where Fonterra has a dairy plant. This is part of the Northland rail upgrade work funded through the Government's NZ Upgrade Programme.

So far we have laid 4,460 new concrete sleepers – some of which were supplied by Busck in Whangārei - to replace life expired timber sleepers. We have also laid 2.9km of new rail laid.

This work will raise the standard of the track to handle heavier trains (18 tonne axle loads). The aim is to complete as much renewal work as possible before the NAL reopens, to avoid further disruption for customers.



New rail and sleepers being installed between Waipanga Road and the Kauri siding



Rebuilding the track foundations and laying new sleepers near Kauri