



# Northland Rail Programme

February 2025

Kia ora,  
We've made great progress rebuilding and improving Northland's railway, and I would like to recognise the support we have seen across the region.

Our major rebuild of the North Auckland Line following the January 2023 weather event, then Cyclone Gabrielle, is all but done - leaving the line more resilient than ever.

The line has been reopened since September and we're now seeing goods on rail get back to their normal volumes.

And the Government funded rail infrastructure upgrade work that started back in 2020 is nearing completion.

Our focus now is on continuing important background work on the proposed Marsden Point Rail Link, or spur line, between Oakleigh (just south of Whangārei) and Marsden Point / Northport.

A lot of work has already been done - including geotechnical testing of ground conditions along the 19km route. We have been engaging with landowners and mana whenua along the route and have now purchased most of the land needed. We have also made a slight realignment to part of the route to avoid cutting across any Māori freehold land, with the required change to the rail designation (consent) currently with

Whangārei District Council for approval.

KiwiRail is working on the detailed business case, including accurate costings to build the new line and options to reopen the currently mothballed line north of Whangārei to Otiria. We intend to submit the business case to the Government later this year for it to consider taking the project to the next stage of detailed design.

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

## Fonterra return to full volumes on the North Auckland Line

Earlier this month we celebrated the return of Fonterra's full rail volumes from Kauri and Whangārei.

While the North Auckland Line reopened to trains in September, Fonterra has gradually ramped up its rail volume to sixteen rail wagons per day.

"Returning to full rail volume and transitioning away from the temporary road operation is a significant milestone for Fonterra," Fonterra Director Global Supply Chain Santiago Aon said.

"Rail strongly supports our customer and sustainability commitments. Being able to return to rail in Northland helps to improve safety, reduce congestion, avoid carbon emissions, and lower road maintenance costs for the region."

Each tonne of freight moved by rail results in a 70% reduction in carbon emissions compared to road transport, supporting Fonterra's dedication to lowering its environmental impact while

meeting the needs of its customers.

KiwiRail Chief Asset Development Officer David Gordon said the North Auckland Line has undergone significant work to improve resilience.

"To help make the line more resilient in future weather events, as part of our weather event rebuild, we have

improved culverts and drainage, strengthened slip-prone slopes, and installed close to 500 metres of retaining structures."

"Northland is a critical part of Fonterra's New Zealand network, and we'll be putting our best foot forward to support their operations and environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals."



A large freight train, fully loaded with Fonterra product, departing KiwiRail's Whangārei yard

## Northland rail upgrades nearing completion

KiwiRail is nearing completion of its Government funded work to upgrade Northland's railway.

Between 2020 and 2023 we upgraded the line between Swanson, north of Auckland, and Whangārei, lowering the track in 13 tunnels to fit modern shipping containers, replacing bridges and improving the track. This allowed the line to take larger freight trains (18 tonne axle loads), just before extreme weather events left more than 200 damage sites in their wake.

By September last year we had completed the same track upgrade between Whangārei and Kauri, where Fonterra has its dairy plant, and late last year we completed the upgrade to our Whangarei rail yard to support moving greater rail volumes in the future.

Work at the Whangārei yard included track upgrades, drainage improvements, a new hard stand for the Container Terminal, and upgraded lighting to better enable 24 hour operations when required.

While the North Auckland Line weather repairs were completed and the line to Kauri reopened in September, we have continued rebuild work at the 228km mark, north of Kauri.

There was a significant washout below the track in the area, which threatened the nearby rail bridge. The work included building a large sheet-piling retaining wall and reinstating the stream.

This is important work to protect the rail corridor ahead of the line north of Kauri potentially being reopened at a later date.



*The much improved Whangārei Container Terminal and rail yard*



*Work at the 228km mark, north of Kauri*

## Otiria rail yard safety improvements underway

The final part of our Government funded work in Northland is improving the rail yard at Otiria.

The local community has raised concerns about people trespassing in our yard and rubbish being dumped there.

In recent months we have been working closely with community members to tidy up the site and support them to beautify it.

A huge thanks goes out to Pamela-Anne Ngohe-Simon, who organised clearing of the area, rubbish removal, flax planting, and community graffiti cleanup along the old yard entrance on Otiria Road.

This dedication has turned KiwiRail's old skid pad into an inviting stop along the nearby Pou Herenga Tai – Twin Coast Cycleway and an area that can be used for community events.

After meeting with Northland Regional Council (NRC), neighbours and community, and

local Marae representatives, work has now begun improving fencing around the Otiria yard.

To complement NRC's recently completed flood mitigation works,

KiwiRail will also be cleaning, enlarging and correcting grades on swale, and upsizing culverts on the southern half of the Otiria yard. This work is getting underway and is expected to continue into May.



*Improvements made so far at Otiria – a stop along Pou Herenga Tai and community space*