



May 2023

Hawke's Bay Cyclone Gabrielle Rail Recovery

Kia ora

KiwiRail remains focussed on reopening rail lines in the Hawkes Bay and over the last month we have been making solid progress.

With the rail line to Hastings reopened in early April and a temporary Container Terminal established, we have been moving freight by rail to Hastings, where it is trucked on to Napier. Working closely with Napier Port and Heinz Wattie's, we have also been able to utilise a separate rail siding so that Winstone Pulp & Paper will be able to bring their larger export volumes to Hastings, to be road-bridged to the port, later this month. These are important steps to help the region's economy recovery.

Work repairing the badly damaged rail line around Awatoto is going well, and we have developed a much deeper understanding of the damage to the line between Napier and Wairoa.

We remain committed to reopening the rail line to Wairoa, and are working with Waka Kotahi, Higgins, Downer and Fulton Hogan under the Alliance for Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti cyclone recovery.

We appreciate your patience as we reinstate the rail infrastructure in Hawke's Bay.

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

Daniel Headifen

KiwiRail Programme Director

Hastings - Napier progress

Cyclone Gabrielle did major damage to the rail line between Hastings and Napier.

Our focus has been in the Awatoto area – clearing metres-deep layers of wood debris; taking out damaged signals cables and temporarily removing fibre optic cables; removing badly undermined and damaged track and preparing the rail bridge (Bridge 217), next to the Waitangi road bridge, for temporary repair.

As the pictures show, damaged track has been removed and rail embankments have been levelled in preparation for being rebuilt; and we have removed the badly damaged spans from Bridge 217.

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Example of damaged track being removed and the ground cleared around Awatoto – before (left) and after (right).



Rail removal on Bridge 217 – before (left) and after (right) – ahead of temporary repairs beginning.

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Our bridge contractor is currently setting up on site and we have railed in another load of steel casings, for use as temporary piers, from Christchurch.

Site investigations at and around Bridge 217 are continuing, with additional geotechnical work underway. We have also completed a bathymetric survey of the river bed, where the piers for the rail bridge will be placed. This helps us understand what level of scour has occurred on the riverbed and what debris from the destroyed section of the bridge is still present beneath the water. We were also able to do survey work for Waka Kotahi, on their adjacent road bridge.

Work rebuilding the rail bridge is expected to begin this month, but it will take time to reopen the line to Napier. At this stage we expect it will stay closed for some months. We remain committed to reopening the line towards the end of the year.



Train loads of steel casings, to act as temporary piers for the rebuild of Bridge 217, are being railed from Christchurch to Hastings.



A bathymetric survey of the river bed has been completed.

Napier – Wairoa progress

The rail line from Napier to Wairoa suffered some extensive damage in Cyclone Gabrielle and given the terrain, inspecting some of the line has been difficult.

We have now completed initial assessments and have identified more than 300 damage sites along its length. While many of these are fairly minor, some are significant. For example, up to 7 km of the line, particularly in the Esk Valley, may need to be fully replaced.

We have established a specific team which will focus on understanding and quantifying the time, cost and material requirements for repairing the line. They have started doing site visits, building off the experience they gained doing the damage inspections. Their work includes looking at long lead materials, like new rail which has to be imported.

There is still a long way to go on the Napier – Wairoa work, and we are still unable to provide a timeframe for when it could be reopened.

We are also making improvements to our geographic database and digital tools, with the aim of using 3D digital models to help assess and design repair solutions for damage sites. This will help the speed of the recovery.



Slips in the Esk River Valley



Removing damaged rail in Eskdale. The digger is holding the rail down while the person cuts it