



Northland Rail Programme

August/September 2024

Kia ora

It's my pleasure to let you know we have today reopened the North Auckland Line, following massive damage during the January 2023 extreme weather event and Cyclone Gabrielle.

Work repairing more than 200 damage sites along the line between Swanson and Whangārei – some requiring major earthworks to remediate slips and embankment collapses – was largely completed and the track reinstated a few months ago.

Since then we have been undertaking repairs to 28 wooden and steel bridges

on the line, which was held up by winter weather, and carrying out testing and commissioning work.

Repairing the line has been a huge undertaking. We've had close to 300 people working at a time, shifted 110,000 tonnes of earth and replaced 25,000 tonnes of ballast (the rocks that the tracks sit in).

We've also worked to improve many culverts and drainage to get water flows away from the rail corridor quickly, cut away and put rock anchors into slip-prone slopes, and built close to 500 metres of retaining structures. This work

will help make the rail line more resilient and better able to withstand weather events to come.

I would like to thank the numerous contractors – including many from Northland – who have worked tirelessly, battling Northland's difficult geology at times, to get the job done.

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

Raising rail safety awareness in Northland

It has been around 20 months since scheduled freight services ran on the North Auckland Line.

With the North Auckland Line now reopened, it's important that people are cautious any time the drive or walk up to a level crossing.

Always stop and take a good look in either direction for trains before crossing the tracks.

To help raise rail safety awareness, last month some of our Whangārei team visited six local primary and intermediate schools.

KiwiRail Locomotive Engineer (train driver) David Rummery says the team talked to more than 2,000 students and he is keen to visit more schools.

"It's a great way to get out into our community and I think it was both

informative and entertaining for the kids. It allowed us to get across how careful everyone needs to be around level crossings.

"Sharing our personal stories helped reinforce the message of how helpless it feels to be in the cab when there's something on the track in front of us. We hit the brakes and honk the horn, but trains are very heavy machines and they can't stop quickly."



KiwiRail LE David Rummery taking questions from students at Adventist Christian School

Progress repairing the North Auckland Line

Repairs have been completed on the numerous minor - moderate and on all 35 major storm damage sites on the NAL.

Completed repairs to the 28 bridges between Kumeu and Kauri have included replacing piles, piers and corbels (which transfer weight within the bridge structure). In addition to KiwiRail's structures teams from other parts of New Zealand, specialist contractors were also brought in to assist with the work.

NZ Upgrade Programme funded track upgrade work (to allow 18-tonne axle loads) on the line north of Whangārei to Kauri, where Fonterra has a dairy plant, and track upgrades at our Whangārei Rail Yard are complete.

Work to reconstruct the hardstand surface at our Whangārei container terminal, together with drainage improvements, are now complete and we expect to install upgraded lighting in the terminal next month.

There is a small amount of further remediation work to do at some northern track sites but these will not stop trains running and will be done, as part of our standard track maintenance, over time.



Work replacing a corbel on Bridge 140, Maungaturoto.



A range of work is being undertaken on Bridge 150 at Paparoa, including on piles and corbels.

Reducing environmental impacts

Reducing environmental impacts has been an important focus during our work to repair extreme weather damage on the North Auckland Line.

There were a number of significant slips around Tahekeroa, north of Helensville. Fixing them involved clearing slips and excavating spoil so that engineered structures could be built. These included stacked stone embankments, retaining walls, drainage improvements, and other solutions to repair the damage and protect the rail line from future slips.

This resulted in more than 24,800 tonnes of earth being removed from the slip sites.

Since March we have been working with a local farmer and rail corridor neighbour to deal with this material. With their support we have been depositing the earth on their farm.

This has huge benefit for KiwiRail and the environment.

In addition to considerable cost savings in not needing dump trucks to travel over an hour to the nearest tip, it also saves more than 275 tonnes of carbon emissions (CO₂e).

And we have been able to improve the farmer's land, making previously difficult to access areas productive and accessible.



An example of a remediated site near Tahekeroa, where a slip prone hillside was excavated and an engineered rock structure (left of picture) built.



Depositing earth and levelling the farmer's paddocks.