



# Northland Rail Programme

## June 2026

Kia ora

The North Auckland Line continues to stand up to Northland weather events, as we continue our work improving its resilience.

Northland was hit hard by extreme weather in January and again when Cyclone Vaianu made landfall in April.

Despite significant flooding in the region, damage to the rail line between Swanson and Kauri, north of Whangārei, was fairly minimal.

There were some fallen trees, a few small slips and some damage caused by blocked culverts, but this was repaired quickly so that freight trains could resume running.

This much improved resilience – which is crucial for KiwiRail to get more freight volumes on rail – really is a testament to the significant Government investment in the line.

Funding for upgrades were first announced in 2019, leading to a massive project that saw many kilometres of aging rail, sleepers and bridges replaced, and the track lowered in 13 tunnels so modern shipping containers could be moved by rail to and from Northland for the first time.

Following the extreme weather event in early 2023 and Cyclone Gabrielle there was further significant Government investment to improve weather resilience. This included replacing

more than 30 culverts to improve drainage, building 14 retaining walls, and rebuilding rail embankments to strengthen track foundations.

You can see some of our ongoing resilience work in these pictures.

This combined investment is today showing its worth and, with progress being made on the Marsden Point Rail Link project, is setting up the future of rail in Northland.

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



*Installing a new culvert south of Wellsford, to protect the corridor from storm water flows.*



Six barrel-culverts being installed under the rail line near Kaukapakapa. This involved removing and digging beneath the rail embankment, installing a lining and creating a stable base, then installing the culverts and rebuilding the embankment.



## Marsden Point Rail Link – design sprint underway

Three potential construction partners have been identified for a “design sprint” that is focused on reducing the cost to build the proposed Marsden Point Rail Link (MPRL).

This week Minister for Rail Rt Hon Winston Peters announced the successful companies, following Expressions and Interest and Request for Proposal processes earlier this year. The Minister’s press release can be seen [here](#).

The companies are:

- Acciona
- Downer / Heb JV; and
- Martinus Rail

All are large companies, with track records in delivering big projects like the MPRL. They also have a significant local sub-contractor base they can call on.

The design sprint began this week. It includes interactive sessions with each of the three respondents, looking at value engineering opportunities and efficient ways of building the new rail line. The aim is to find the best value construction.

Each party will submit a proposal on how they would build the line, which will be assessed. We expect to report back to the Rail Minister on the proposals later this year, for the Government to consider.

The MPRL is a major civil construction project which includes building in part of the coastal marine environment, major cut-and-fill earthworks and a number of road and farm access overbridges and underpasses.

The Government has already allocated \$410 million towards building the MPRL, and work through the design sprint will look to minimise any additional funding needed.

With a previous \$40m Government investment, KiwiRail has now purchased all the land needed for the rail line. Whangārei District Council has approved two minor designation changes, related rail line route.

Ecological survey work along the rail line route has been completed.



What the Marsden Point Rail Link could look like. This image shows where it joins the North Auckland Line at Oakleigh, south of Whangārei.