



February 2024

# Northland Rail Programme

Kia ora

Our work repairing the 180km North Auckland Line (NAL) is making progress and we are aiming to have the line re-opened by the middle of the year.

There were more than 200 damage sites along the NAL between Swanson and Whangārei, including overslips, slumps, washouts and underslips, following last year's late January weather event. Many of these were further damaged during Cyclone Gabrielle.

We've had to contend with Northland's slip-prone geology but have so far completed work on more than 70 per cent of the minor to moderate damage sites and work is well underway on many of the major damage sites.

There was a delay moving a fibre optic cable out of the rail corridor, which stopped us working on 18 major damage sites over the Christmas break. The cable has now been moved and work is underway.

To get a sense of the scale of what we are dealing with, it's worth having a look at this video [here](#).

We expect to complete all of the civil works in the next few months. Then there is a stringent process to go through to test and commission the tracks, structures and signals along the entire line before it is safe for heavy freight trains to run between Swanson and Whangārei again.

As mentioned previously, we have also completed the upgrade of the track north of Whangārei, to Kauri,

so it can take heavier trains. And we are currently making changes at our Whangārei rail yard. These are predominantly track layout improvements, which will support carrying greater freight volumes, and drainage improvements to better manage flood risks at the yard.

I'd like to thank everyone – and especially our rail customers – for your patience. We remain committed to reopening the NAL and making sure it can better standup to future weather events.

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

## Progress repairing the North Auckland Line

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

The massive Tahekeroa slip, where 35,000 cubic metres of earth fell close to 400 metres across the road and rail line, was completed in September. Two other large slips in the area were also remediated.

So far work has also been completed on 80 minor-moderate damage sites along the line and is continuing on the remaining 25 minor-moderate sites. Of the 36 major damage sites, work on four of them has been completed. Geotechnical investigations have been completed, contractors appointed and preferred remediation design

options chosen for the 32 remaining major sites. Enabling works, including relocation of wildlife, erosion and sediment control measures, vegetation clearance, and track removal is underway.

Some of the slips along the line have moved land that is in native bush and some areas of bush have needed to be cleared for rebuild work. We continue to engage with ecologists, erosion/ sediment control specialists and the Department of Conservation, to ensure native flora and fauna is protected.

In late December, Kāhu (Swamp harrier) chicks were discovered by our ecological team in dense grass very close to the rail line south of Wellsford. A buffer was put in place around the nest and our team worked very carefully in the area to make sure the birds weren't disturbed.



## Examples of work at major damage sites



*A massive slip below the rail line north of Ranganui, where a 100 metre length of embankment failed. About 21,000 cubic metres of unsuitable, saturated material, eight metres deep had to be excavated. The grey material on top of the “pyramid” is the ballast that the rail line sits in. The terraces cut into the earth will help tie the existing embankment into the new material which will be laid.*



*Work has begun clearing a slumped hillside above the tracks south of Mareretu. Drains will be installed in the slope to help stop more material coming down towards the tracks.*





An example of Northland's slip prone geology. The excavation north of Waitira is where a gentle hillside slumped under the rail line. The track and ballast can be seen in the top left corner of the picture. This area will be rebuilt with sturdy material and improved drainage.



## Please remember to be vigilant around level crossings

- If you are in a car, always slow down as you're approaching a level crossing and be prepared to STOP
- Look out for rail vehicles or machinery at all times, and obey signs and signals

There are increasing numbers of hi-rail vehicles, diggers and specialist machines moving along the NAL to get to worksites.