

MIN-3997 State Highway 6 Closure Update 25 October 2022

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Providing Associate Minister of transport, Hon Kieran McAnulty with an update on the State Highway 6 closure between Blenheim and Nelson, and a response to questions following MIN-3991.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

- The outgoing and incoming Mayors and CEOs of the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough councils were not consulted, rather they were informed of the closure. Their response was that they accepted the need for the urgent repairs and understood the need to undertake the repairs before the busy summer season, as stated in MIN-3991.
- These discussions took place over the weekend of the local government elections. Emma Speight, Director Regional Relationships, phoned the Chief Executives and outgoing Mayors after the decision was made to go ahead with the emergency repairs on Friday, 7 October.
- All parties accepted that the emergency repairs were necessary and sought clarification that a full closure was the best option. The alternative of a very long period of closures (24+ weeks) with daily managed opening was acknowledged as being a significant risk, when further rain could make the worst sites impassable (and take longer to repair). They all identified that affected residents and businesses would find the closure challenging and offered advice and support on contacting different communities.
- Emma then provided follow up information to the incoming Mayors on Monday, 10 and Tuesday, 11 October 2022. These were by phone or zoom, and the feedback was very consistent with the conversations on Friday.
- Waka Kotahi and other local/ central government representatives have attended two community meetings for directly affected residents in the Whangamoa/ Kokorua Road area hosted by a local volunteer firefighter, Nigel Patterson. At the most recent meeting, on Thursday, 20 October 2022, Waka Kotahi attendees were Mark Owen and Emma Speight, along with Nelson Mayor-elect Nick Smith and Nelson City Council Group Manager Infrastructure Alec Louverdis.
- Emma and Mark provided an update on the nature of the damage to the key sites on SH6. They also provided an overview of the works. They talked about the negotiations underway to get access to the Nelson end confirmed via a forestry access road and confirmed that there are no suitable access road options to the Blenheim end, because of the nature of the work and storm damage to forestry roads.
- Overall, the residents' meetings were constructive, although very concerned about the uncertainty and the potential impact of the road closure on their lives, employment, schooling and animal welfare. For the majority of residents, the forestry access route (if confirmed) along with managed convoys will provide a workable alternative for the seven weeks of the closure. Other government agencies are also providing support, including the Ministry of Primary Industries Rural Support Trust, Ministry of Education, Te Whatu Ora and Ministry of Social Development.
- At the meeting, a small number of residents identified specific issues and concerns that may be very challenging to resolve and/or have an impact on their employment or children's schooling. We are continuing to work with them to help alleviate their concerns.

- So far, there have been 26 enquiries from people outside the closure on either side. There have been 48 enquiries from people living inside the closure. The residents' meeting was attended by 23 people.
- On 26 October 2022, Waka Kotahi will contact all people within the road closure via email to provide them an update on access.
- The key concerns being communicated by residents include:
 - The detour from either side of the closure is very long and will impact people financially and may cause health concerns.
 - People want to know if they can get through the closure for getting kids to school or to jobs they cannot perform from home.
 - People want to know what support they can get in terms of financial support for loss of income, petrol or accommodation.
 - People living within the road closure or with stock within the closure area are asking for confirmation of their access during the closure.
- Further updates on communications with residents will be provided in the Waka Kotahi weekly reports this week.

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