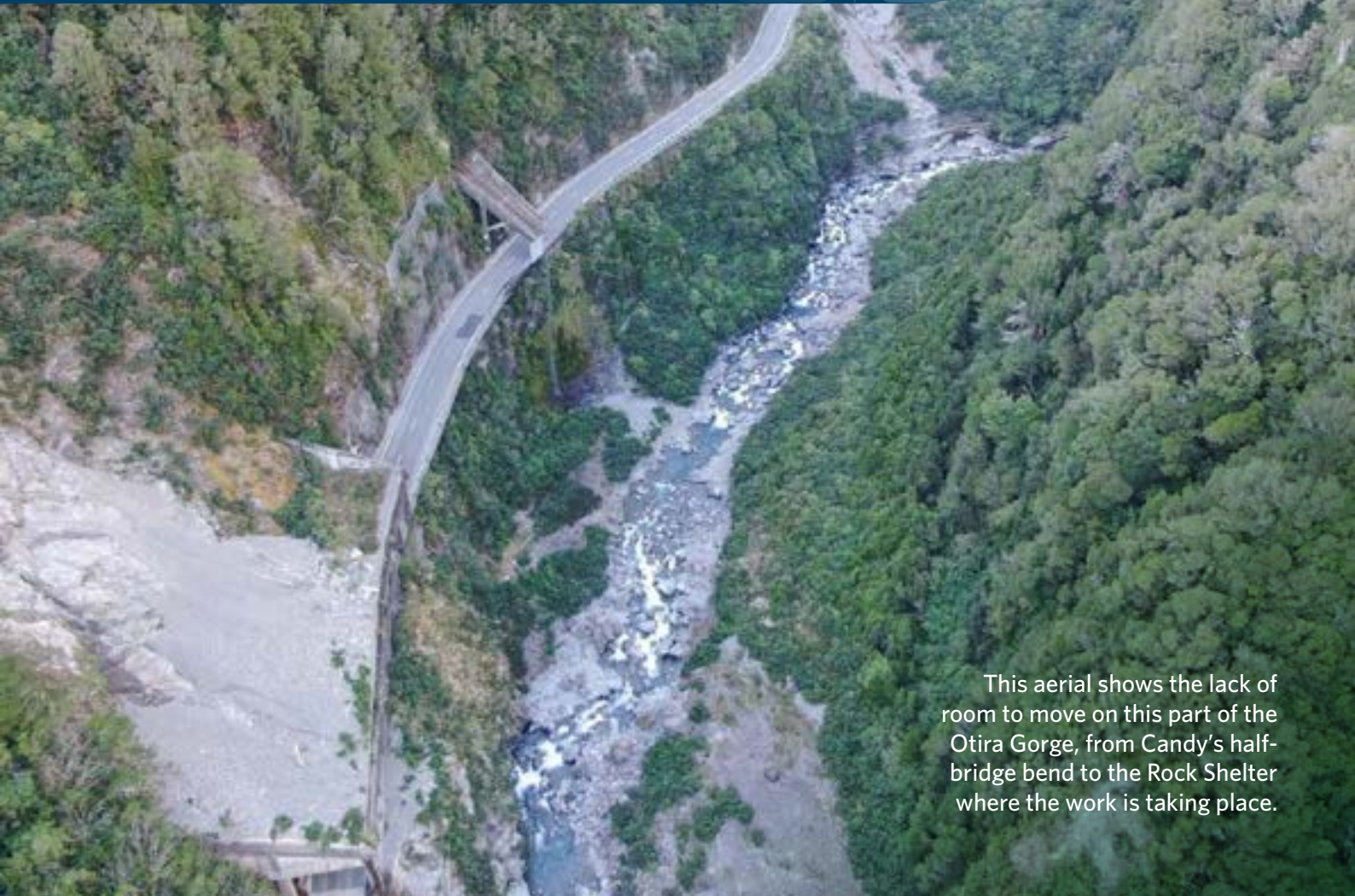




# Otira Gorge road closure



This aerial shows the lack of room to move on this part of the Otira Gorge, from Candy's half-bridge bend to the Rock Shelter where the work is taking place.

A 342m section of road in the Otira Gorge needs to be resurfaced and the road needs to be closed to complete the work quickly and safely.

The Arthur's Pass route, linking the Te Tai o Poutini West Coast and Canterbury, will be closed during daytime only between Monday 4 December and Friday 15 December.

Drivers will be able to use SH73 between Otira and Arthur's Pass Village until 10am each day and after 6pm at night, Monday to Friday. The route will be open over the weekend of 9 and 10 December.

We know SH73 through the Otira Gorge is an important transport corridor connecting Christchurch to the West Coast, and the closure is unwelcome for many regular road users, businesses along the route and visitors

to the West Coast. A full road closure means we can get a lot more work done in a shorter space of time, compared with shorter duration closures which would span over several weeks. Due to the restriction of the lane width and size of our equipment, stop go is not an option.

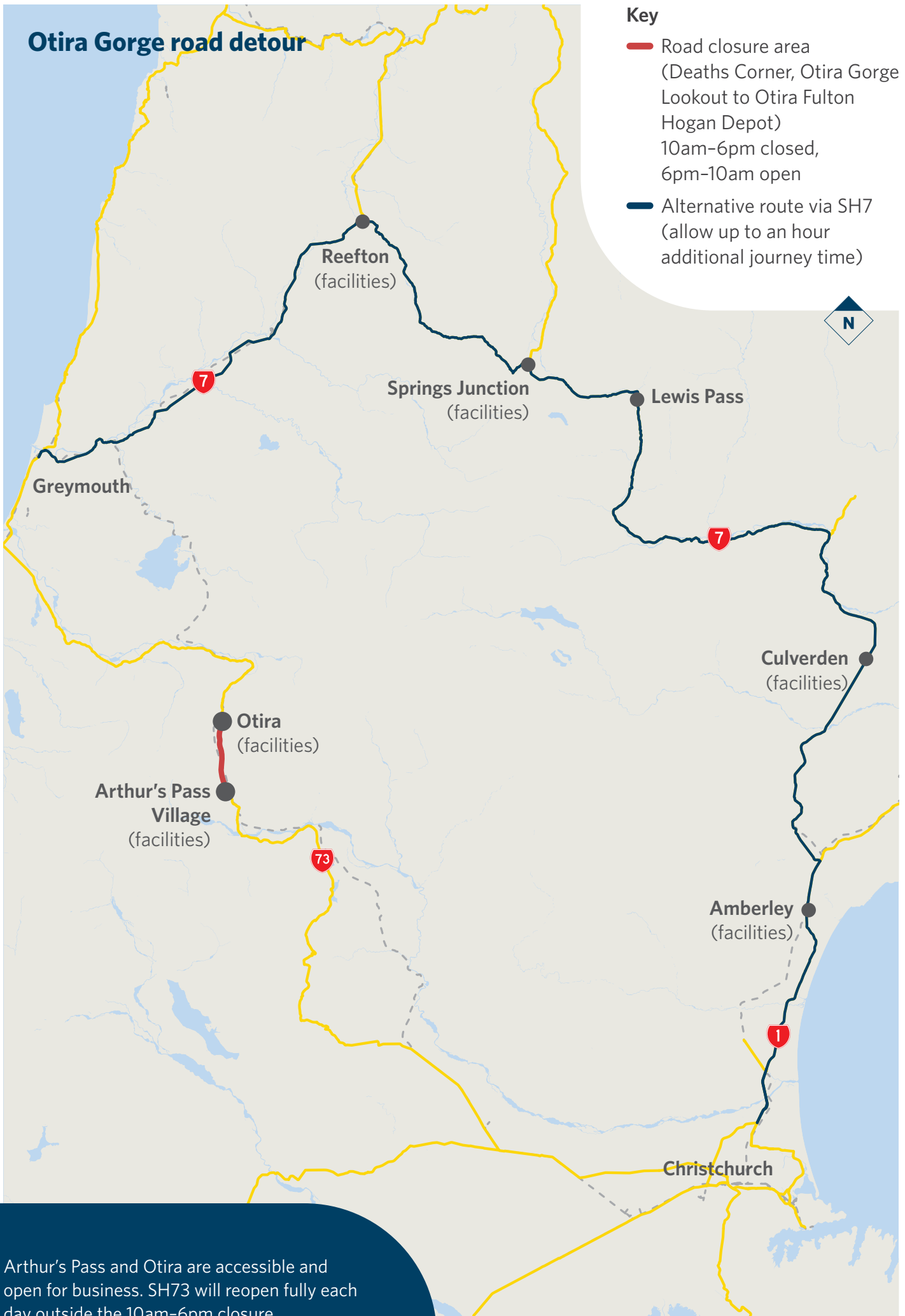
Considering safety, efficiency and impact to journeys, the fortnight before Christmas 2023 has been agreed as better than later options.

The 342m section of road to be resurfaced is located above the Rock Shelter below the viaduct on the Otira/West Coast side of the highway.

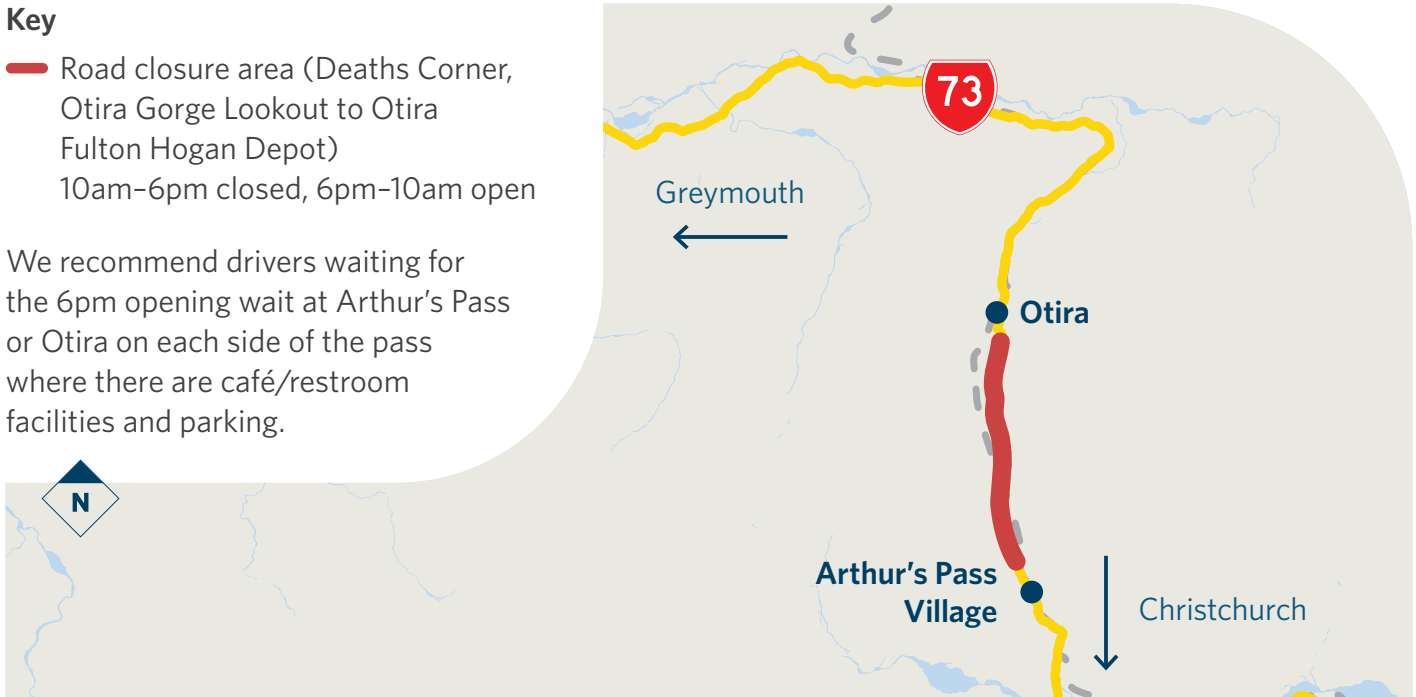
## Otira Gorge road detour

### Key

- Road closure area  
(Deaths Corner, Otira Gorge Lookout to Otira Fulton Hogan Depot)  
10am–6pm closed,  
6pm–10am open
- Alternative route via SH7  
(allow up to an hour  
additional journey time)



Arthur's Pass and Otira are accessible and open for business. SH73 will reopen fully each day outside the 10am–6pm closure.



## Why we're doing the work now

We know roadworks are disruptive, especially when we close a state highway over the busy summer period.

A lot of thought and planning has gone into the timing of the Otira Gorge work to minimise disruption to people who rely on SH73 being open. Being a very challenging environment to work in, we had to consider the best time for the work to be completed to ensure workers are kept safe, and to ensure the work is a success.

The asphalt surface being constructed needs a minimum air temperature, which we only get during the warm, summer months and completing the work during the day is safer for our workers as rockfall risk cannot be safety managed at night when it can't be seen.

We consulted on a range of opening times and durations, including stopping the crews and machinery to enable traffic through a midday convoy. This would significantly reduce productivity and more than double the length of time required to do the work. The people we spoke to agreed that a shorter timeframe with a more productive working day was preferable to a longer period of time.

The work is also weather dependent. If the crew can't work due to bad weather, the road will remain open on those days, but it may result in those closed days being rescheduled for a later date.

Go to [www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz) for up to date state highway travel information.

## What we're doing

We're using large machinery to remove the existing surface and lay a new one on both lanes of the state highway. It was last resealed around 12 years ago, with just short-term repairs in more recent years. The road is narrow in this part of the Otira Gorge, with only around 7.5 metres between the guardrail and cliff face. This means the paving and sealing machines fill up the entire space, and don't allow room for traffic to safely pass while work is underway.

Emergency service vehicles will have access throughout the closure and will be escorted through the site.

## Alternate route SH7 Lewis Pass

The SH7 route through the Lewis Pass, Reefton and Waipara adds around one hour to the journey to Greymouth and an additional 30 minutes to Hokitika. The ability for people to travel around the 10am to 6pm timeframe means there is still good daylight at each end for road users and travellers.

We urge everyone to plan ahead to factor this closure into their travel plans.

SH73 will be reopened fully each day outside the 10am to 6pm closure period.

## Walking track access

People accessing Department of Conservation tracks on the east side of Arthur's Pass Village need to consider the road closure times when planning their walks. Access to most Department of Conservation tracks west of Arthur's Pass Village will be available throughout the day. Please follow signage while taking the opportunity to enjoy any walks outside the closed area.



SH73 Peg Leg Creek resurfacing, also between Arthur's Pass and Otira, closer to the top of the pass, completed in 2021. Just one lane of the highway was replaced and there is more room near the cliff face for the crew than the area below where the work is taking place.



## Thank you for your patience

Please be kind and respectful to our workers. We know this closure is inconvenient, with everything having to be balanced, we believe this is the shortest and most efficient way to complete this key piece of work safely and successfully.

Thank you for building in the extra time if you need to take the Lewis Pass route, or for planning your trip around the closure times.



## For more information

Visit [www.nzta.govt.nz/otira](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/otira) Email: [otira@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:otira@nzta.govt.nz)

Phone: **0800 4 HIGHWAYS**