



Progress on the road to recovery

The state of emergency for Tairāwhiti has lifted, but the mahi on the ground continues. Waka Kotahi has been working non-stop to reconnect isolated communities on the Coast and get the region moving again.



The newly opened Mangahauini Track

Access to Tokomaru Bay restored

Weeks of hard mahi from roading contractors in Tairāwhiti has reconnected Tokomaru Bay with Te Puia Springs and the north, thanks to the opening of the new Mangahauini Track.

The new track was opened with a blessing onsite on Monday 3rd April. Cyclone Gabrielle wiped out Hikuwai River No.1 Bridge on SH35 and caused slips and river erosion through the Mangahauini Gorge, meaning that sections of SH35 were impassable, cutting Tokomaru Bay off to the south and north.

As soon as the cyclone had cleared, roading crews got to work in the Mangahauini Gorge, on Waka Kotahi land adjacent to SH35, carving out the beginnings of the temporary bypass track.

Waka Kotahi Central North Island Regional Manager of Maintenance and Operations, Jaclyn Hankin, says it's understandably been an incredibly stressful time for communities isolated and separated from one another.

"We fully support our contractors in what has truly been an example of hard mahi and a proactive, innovative effort to help reconnect communities in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle.

"It's only fitting we recognise the drive of our contractors to get started on this access route in hugely challenging circumstances as we continue to reconnect SH35 and its communities.

"Together with the community-led bypass for the Hikuwai Bridge further south, the new track means residents and road users, who haven't been able to travel south to Gisborne, can now make the journey there. We acknowledge that this will be a huge relief to those communities who have been isolated along SH35, and we thank them for their patience and resilience. It is a testament to all the hard mahi from contractors involved.

"What we have achieved to date could not have been possible without the support of the local communities and contractors, and this is something we are extremely grateful for," says Ms Hankin.



Representatives from local hāpu, Kuru Contracting, Downer and Waka Kotahi gather for a blessing of the Mangahauini Track led by Jack Chambers

Bailey bridge preparations underway at Hikuwai River No. 1 Bridge

Work to install a Bailey bridge over the Hikuwai River is underway, with crews beginning to build the approaches to the bridge. The platform for the crane that will lift the pieces of the bridge into place is also underway, ahead of its arrival from Palmerston North. We have been able to source a larger 300-tonne crane for the job, which is expected to speed up the construction of the bridge.

With the blessing of mana whenua, the design of the bridge will see two piers constructed in the awa.

The Bailey bridge is expected to be completed in May, though timeframes are dependent on river levels and weather. Once completed, its use will be limited to vehicles under 50 tonnes. We know it has been tough going for the Tokomaru Bay community, and we are grateful for their patience and resilience as we work to restore this critical connection as fast as we safely can.

State Highway 38 now open

Fantastic news for our communities in the Wairoa District: the State Highway 38 Wairoa to Bay of Plenty connection is now fully restored. The special purpose road managed by Wairoa District Council that continues towards the Bay of Plenty from Aniwaniwa Falls has now opened to all vehicles under temporary traffic management.

Travel safe

If you're planning to be on the road this Easter, please drive with care.

There are a range of hazards on our highways following Cyclone Gabrielle, and traffic is expected to be heavy. Allow extra time for your trip and check our Journey Planner tool at [journeys.nzta.govt.nz/journey-planner](https://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz/journey-planner) before you leave. Please travel carefully through work sites, follow the instructions of roading crews, and obey the temporary speed limits.



Contractors at work in the Waikare Gorge, where a Bailey bridge will be installed

Bailey bridge underway at SH2 Putorino

A major milestone has been ticked off in the construction of the Waikare Gorge Bailey bridge, with the bridge's single pier completed this week. The pier stands in the middle of the Waikare Awa and will support the 49-metre bridge.

The next step in the project is to build the approaches to the bridge. These will be in a slightly different location, as the previous bridge was curved and the Bailey bridge will be straight.

Waka Kotahi Regional Manager of Maintenance and Operations Jaclyn Hankin says a huge effort has gone into getting to this point. "A big thank you to our contractors who are leading the work on the ground, and to WSP who've designed the Bailey bridge."



SH2 closure ahead between Wairoa and Gisborne

As the clean up from Cyclone Gabrielle continues, roading crews will be replacing the collapsed Mōrere Culvert north of Nūhaka, on SH2. The works require the stretch of road around the culvert to be closed between 8am Wednesday 19 April and 8am Friday 21 April. The closure means that communities along SH2, including Wairoa, will be without access to Gisborne for 48 hours as no vehicles will be permitted through the area. However, SH38 will be open. We understand that this will be disruptive and we have been working closely with the communities affected to minimise the impact. This work is critical to strengthening the resilience of the road in heavy rain, and crews will be working day and night to get the job done as quickly as possible. Please plan your travel around the closure.

Keep up to date

For more information on roading projects, check out nzta.govt.nz/projects/connecting-tairawhiti or sign up to our e-newsletter at connectingtairawhiti@nzta.govt.nz



Stabilisation work being carried out

Hillsides stabilised at Otoko

A rolling closure of State Highway 2 at Otoko Hill enabled teams to get stuck in to slip stabilisation work.

Contractors worked across two sites where slips were continuing to move or posed a risk of coming down. Drainage pipes were installed at the first site to reduce the saturation in the soil, protecting the corridor from further movement as we head into winter, and a slumping block wall repaired. The second slip site required cutting and benching, which is ongoing.

There may be some further stabilisation works required ahead of winter.

Connecting Tairāwhiti with Napier

We are working hard to open the road, but it's not a quick fix and repair works are dependent on various factors, including favourable weather.

We understand how critical this route is to the region, and we'll re-open the road as soon as it can be used safely, but the scale of the damage is significant and there's a lot of work still to be done. Between Bay View and Wairoa there are still approximately 98 sites to repair and the majority of these are underslips. There are 23 sites where a lane is impacted, and these will take time to repair. We also don't yet have a full view of the damage as some areas are still covered in silt.

There is a lot of damage to repair around Tūtira and the Devil's Elbow. There are numerous drop-outs, shoulder repairs and surface repairs required as well as silt clearing, drain clearing and debris removal to be done, and we are finalising plans to bring in abseilers to help stabilise slopes around the Devil's Elbow. We are working to restore this lifeline as quickly as possible.

Thanks to our highway heroes

We're grateful for the mahi of the teams on the ground, who are putting in the hard yards every day and making strong progress toward reconnecting Tairāwhiti communities. Please help our crews by only travelling if necessary – the faster they can work, the quicker we'll be able to restore access. If you do need to travel, please take extra care around work sites, obey the speed limits and follow any instructions from roading crews.



Teams at work at Kopuaroa