

TREC Pānui

East Coast recovery and rebuild mahi



“Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini”
Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many

TREC Pānui is a monthly newsletter from the [Transport Rebuild East Coast \(TREC\)](#) Alliance updating communities across Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) and Te Matau a Māui (Hawke's Bay) about the work being done to rebuild state highway and rail networks impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle.

Wet weather in the past week has again impacted Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay communities and temporarily closed parts of the state highways. Ongoing rainfall is challenging for affected communities given the intensity of weather events over the past few years.

Huge thanks to all the crews who were out clearing debris and opening roads so people could safely use the network. Improvements are being made to help the network better cope with heavy rain and weather events. We've seen in the past week with significant rainfall in the regions, that surface flooding dissipates more quickly in areas where drainage has been improved.

However, the network remains susceptible to severe weather events. Road maintenance crews monitor the network to ensure safety, and we will continue to work hard in restoring and securing the highways during and following these events, while our ongoing recovery work also continues.

We can't do any of this work without the continued support of communities and while traffic delays can be frustrating at times, we thank people for their patience.

Kia ora and thank you!

We want to acknowledge and thank everyone who attended our 11 community drop-in sessions and community meetings held in March and April across Hawke's Bay, Wairoa and Tairāwhiti, and who took the time to provide us with feedback.

These events were an opportunity to connect with communities to talk about TREC and what we do and to discuss ideas for potential rebuild projects.

We also received good feedback and insights on the impacts of our construction work which we've used to help improve how we set up and manage our work sites to support better travel times. We're always looking to hear your feedback so we can adapt where possible and make continuous improvements. Please email us at info@trec.nz or call 0800 80 TREC (0800 80 8732) with your feedback or questions.

Ngā mihi nui - thanks for your support.



Community drop-in session 18 March 2024, Eskdale



Community drop-in session 26 March 2024, Wairoa

Transport Rebuild East Coast



Some of the work underway



Thank you for your patience and for helping to keep our people and other road users safe while this essential work is done.

Hikuwai Bridges Replacement project update

The construction start date for the State Highway 35 Hikuwai Bridges Replacement project has been reset to later this year. TREC will take more time to get the best outcomes for our community and our project partners.

The team will use an extended pre-construction period to focus further on design development, allow more time to address ground improvement challenges, ensure maximum engagement of local providers and ensure environmental factors are addressed appropriately.



Recovery, maintenance and operations updates

Recovery work in Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay will be continuing over the coming months. Below is a list of 'hot spots' where you will see works happening and could expect travel delays.

Stay up to date by checking the [NZTA Journey Planner](#). And if you'd like to receive email updates of our weekly works schedule, send your details to info@trec.nz to join the email list.

Te Matau a Māui Hawke's Bay

We are expecting to have a peak of 35 recovery projects active this coming winter. This means there will be some delays along State Highways 2, 5, 38, 50-51. With winter weather approaching some work may be delayed or take longer than expected.

Hot spots to expect delays are:

- SH2 Napier to Tutira expect up to 40-minute delays.
- On SH5 you can currently expect delays up to 40-minutes. These delays will tail off towards the end of June as several safety improvement projects are completed and our road maintenance programme will finish for the season.

Devil's Elbow SH2

2

Recovery work is continuing at multiple sites.

- Work is tracking well at the culvert (see photograph above) and is expected to be finished this winter, weather permitting.
- After King's Birthday, stabilising work will start at two northern sites. You won't necessarily see the work from the roadside because the team will be working below the road.
- The recovery work on the Devil's Elbow route will be ongoing until December when it is expected to reopen to two lanes.

We thank everyone travelling through Devil's Elbow for their patience and help to keep our roadworkers safe.

Captain's Culvert SH5

5

Work at Captain's Culvert on SH5 is steadily progressing and is expected to be completed by the end of winter.

Crews have been ticking off projects in Tairāwhiti with some recovery work completed and more sites getting underway.

Work on SH2

2

- ✓ Tauwhatinui Bridge repairs completed.
- ✓ Maraetaha Bridge scour repairs completed.
- ✓ Otoko Flats underslip completed.

Work on nine sites at Otoko Hill are planned throughout winter with the first three underway from late May. The work will strengthen this section of SH2 which was severely impacted in Cyclone Gabrielle and make it more resilient.

Early engagement with key stakeholders is also underway in Te Karaka for a project that proposes to raise the highway at Nesbitt's Dip.

Work on SH35

35

- ✓ Mangatuna River slip completed.
- ✓ Urban Asphaltting Programme (nightwork) is underway.
- ✓ Turitaka Hill work to strengthen the riverbank wall is underway.



Urban asphaltting work in Gisborne

Be a road safety hero



This month included Road Safety Week. The theme of Road Safety Week 2024 (20-26 May) was 'Be a road safety hero', recognising everyone who helps to make our roads safer and support people after a crash, and explaining how we can all play a part in making journeys safer for everyone.

Here's our top tips for keeping yourself and others safe when travelling through work sites across Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti.

- ★ When you see roadworkers out on the road, travel safely through their worksites. Sticking to the posted speed limit, follow signage and any instructions you receive, and give them a wave to say thanks for their tremendous mahi.
- ★ Every day people working on the road deal with dangerous behaviour around their worksites—such as people not slowing down, not following instructions, or being abusive and aggressive. It's not acceptable. They don't deserve to be put in danger or be subjected to abuse when they're doing their job.
- ★ Always comply with temporary traffic lights. You put yourself and others in danger if you drive through a red light.



Traffic management in place while work is underway at White Pine Bush

Based on community feedback, we've recently set up traffic lights with a countdown timer at Devil's Elbow on SH2 for outside work hours. The countdown timer shows how long you'll need to wait until the light goes green. These lights are also more responsive - when there's no traffic at the other end the lights will turn green quicker, so you don't need to wait as long. These lights will also be on SH5.

Rolling and a rocking



Skilled abseilers are working on Hawke's Bay hillsides to keep road users and workers below safe from potential rockfall hazards.



For about seven weeks from mid-May, TREC has engineering teams scheduled to carry out further night 'rock scaling' operations at Devil's Elbow and Waikoau Hill along SH2 north of Napier (dates subject to weather and other changes).

This means the road has to be closed for short bursts of activity to drop and clear rocks while still helping to keep traffic flowing. To minimise impact on road users, this essential work is being scheduled to happen at night from 8pm to 5am and involves 15-minute stop/stop (where traffic is held in both directions). Please expect up to 25-minute wait times at this site if you're travelling through here at that time.

Not for the faint-hearted: What is rock scaling?

Rock scaling is an adventurous job where a team of skilled abseilers hang from the cliffsides safely dislodging loose rocks and boulders that have been identified for removal.

Once dislodged, crews push the rocks down the hill in a safe and controlled manner.



Rocks too hefty or stubborn to roll are drilled and filled with a cracking agent to reduce their size. If this doesn't work, then the team bring in blasting specialists to drill and fill the rocks with explosives and then blow them up safely.

In early April, SH2 was closed at night for rock blasting at Devil's Elbow which involved blowing up four fairly large rocks measuring 4-5 cubic metres each - around the same size as a Toyota Corolla (that's a lot of rock!)



Crew blasting material into a rock at Devil's Elbow in April

Why this work is important

Not only does this work ensure safe travel for road users and the crews working onsite during the day, but it also protects our roading infrastructure, minimises rock-related disruptions and helps our hillsides better withstand future weather events.

TREC Construction Project Manager Maurice Talbot says while a lot of the rock is embedded, heavy rainfall could loosen them which is why this work is so important.

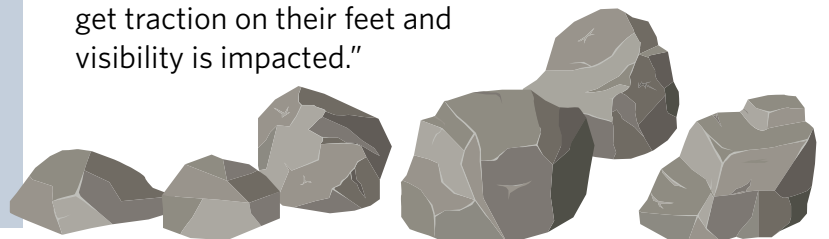
The hillsides surrounding Devil's Elbow were initially cleared following Cyclone Gabrielle, but subsequent geotechnical inspections revealed some loose rocks and material remained, so this work is ongoing.

Race against the clock

As soon as the roads close with a stop sign at each end, the clock starts ticking. Crew only get 15 minutes at a time. Maurice says crews have about eight minutes to drop the rocks before teams need the other seven to rush in and clear the lanes below ready for motorists to safely pass through.

On top of tight timeframes, crews often face the added frustration of rocks getting stuck on the way down and needing a second push, working at night, as well as regularly having to stop work while being up against the weather elements.

"The environment they're working in is pretty tough, if it starts raining it doesn't help," Maurice says. "If it's too slippery or muddy, the crew can't get traction on their feet and visibility is impacted."



Usage of drones

We use drones to give us a bird's eye view over landscapes and highways where we need to work. This extra information and data is valuable to help us design and build infrastructure suitable for the geology and landscape.

You may spot our drones about 100 metres up flying over highways and adjacent land. The drones are large and can make some noise but are harmless. Our drone operators follow all required guidelines and legislation.

If you have any concerns or questions let us know via info@trec.nz or 0800 80 TREC (0800 80 8732).



Nailed it: First TREC project handed over

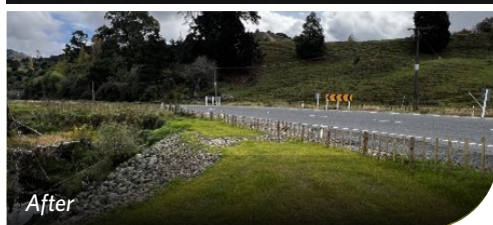
The hard work continues to pay off as we celebrate our first recovery project getting to the 'handover' stage. Work to safeguard SH2, north of Gisborne at Otoko Flats from river scouring (erosion of soil around a bridge foundation) has now wrapped up.



Construction Project Engineer Gurdeep Singh and Quality and Handover Quality Engineer Dale Gibson at State Highway 2, north of Gisborne



Before



After

What we mean by 'handover'

'Handover' is the final stage of a recovery project's life cycle. That's when the physical works have been completed, followed by the site being monitored over a period of time by a Quality Assurance team to ensure there are no issues.

Only after that time can the 'handover' of that site go back to the road owner, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA).

What work was done at this site

At this location the Waihuka River caused an underslip during Cyclone Gabrielle.

Designed to prevent water from eroding the bank adjacent to the highway, this project involved construction of a rock buttress (a structure built against a wall to strengthen it) for scour and erosion protection.

Construction Project Engineer Gurdeep Singh says the principle of this rock armour buttress slope is to improve road stability and prevent surface water scouring during future weather events.

Working together

Jesse James Contracting Gisborne Ltd further reinstated the topsoil, hydroseeded and repaired fencing destroyed during Cyclone Gabrielle.

Gurdeep says part of the success of the project was good communication, transparency, and buy-in for all parties working together.

Pre-construction meetings were key for sharing knowledge, experience, and establishing efficient processes to get the job done right.

Local Contractor: Hometown legends, Quality Roothing and Services

For a local Wairoa-based company being able to help its own community rebuild and recover has been an incredibly fulfilling journey – one in which hope and gratitude feature highly.

QRS, or Quality Roothing and Services, specialises in infrastructure, civil contracting, traffic management and roading among other capacities, and has up until now worked on six projects with TREC, as well as highway maintenance works.

Currently, QRS has projects on the go on SH38 and SH2.



QRS Project Manager Chris McGregor is proud of the work QRS does to uplift their own community

Award winning locals

The company, which won a community contribution award in 2020 at the Hawke's Bay Business Awards, values giving back to the community highly and prioritises sponsorships like local sporting endeavours or student scholarships to support a thriving community for all.

As one of the largest employers in Wairoa, QRS has many staff who were personally affected by the devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle.

Proud to be making a difference

QRS Project Manager Chris McGregor says while the task of rebuilding seemed daunting at first, gaining traction has helped him and his team get their heads around what needs to be done and how best to do it.

"The work is meaningful to all of us and many of us feel grateful to be able to be involved in getting our community back up on its feet. The attitude of our guys after the cyclone was unreal, I personally am very proud of them and very hopeful for where we are going next," Chris says.

Family and friends who care

With more than 130 staff from a small local community, many QRS staff are related to or know each other closely – which makes for successful working relationships. "We have a few husband and wife combos, brother and sisters, or neighbours and a lot of family members. We are mostly all locals who care about Wairoa a great deal," Chris says.

In the future, Chris says his team is happy to go where TREC needs its expertise and skill, but for now the team is grateful to be able to focus on the immediate impacts to Wairoa and what needs to be done close to home.

Ecologists' important role in construction

As construction continues across the East Coast, our TREC ecologists play a critical role in helping to look after our native biodiversity through the implementation of the TREC Ecological Management Plan. New Zealand's Wildlife Act 1953 provides robust protections to safeguard animals classified as wildlife - including some of the country's most endangered species.

From the start, our ecologists are crucial, contributing to design and constructability reports and in the planning and delivery of TREC's construction projects. This ensures the work is carried out in a way that minimises impact and takes care of the surrounding environment.



Fish have been carefully relocated to a new home ahead of work taking place at Maraetaha Bridge No.5

Why protecting our native wildlife is important

Our native species are facing challenges with many fish, birds, and lizards at risk or threatened.

TREC Environmental & Sustainability Freshwater Ecologist Danielle Cairns highlights TREC's care for the environment is a fundamental part of how we repair the roads.

"All of the species are a pretty crucial part of the eco-system. We want to make sure that's the case going forward so they're still around and we're not having a negative impact on our native species."

Danielle adds she's been pleasantly surprised by the resilience of the fish species in the area.

"For streams that have been absolutely annihilated by those cyclones it's so awesome to go and see this massive range of species still hanging on in there."

Looking high, looking low

Before construction begins, ecologists conduct a thorough survey - focusing on the area's vegetation. TREC Environmental & Sustainability Freshwater Ecologist Danielle Cairns says by starting with the vegetation, ecologists can determine if it's native, exotic, or providing a habitat for a native species.

Their focus is on key native species, including but not limited to:



Birds - Nests in trees, scrubs, and rank grass. Breeding typically occurs between September and January.



Lizards - Skinks inhabit leaf litter in rocky habitats, long rank grasses and native scrubs while geckos prefer native bush trees.



Fish - Identifying ecological habitats at rivers, streams, and wetlands.

Once fish species are identified, ecologists collaborate with TREC's construction teams to minimise risks. Danielle says this could be from how work sites are set up, through to salvaging fauna before construction begins.

For stream work, a special "electric fishing" technique gently stuns fish so they can be carefully picked up and relocated to safety before construction starts.



Redfin bully



Dinah's bully



Torrentfish

'Make Safe' rail works continue



'Make Safe' works on the damaged rail line between Napier and Wairoa to stop further deterioration are in the process of being wrapped up by KiwiRail. This has included culvert clearing, slope trimming, debris removal, cutting suspended track and hydroseeding.

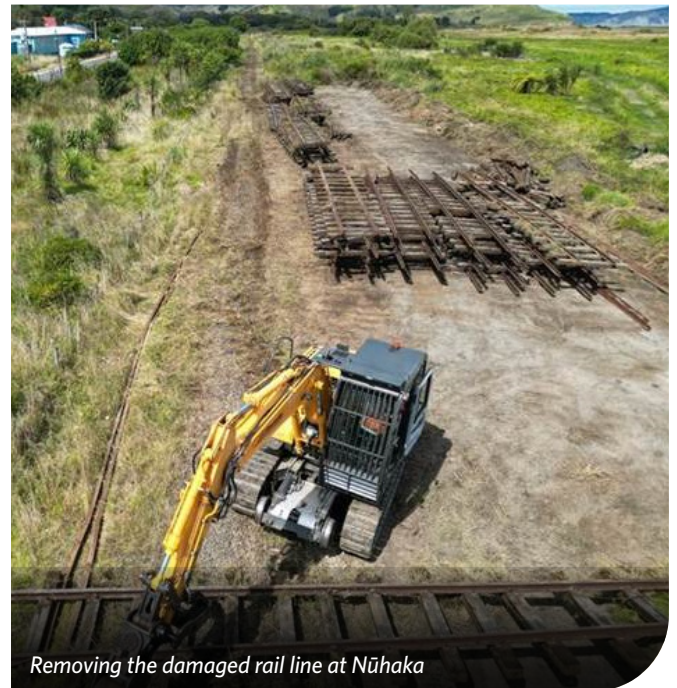
The current focus on these works is around Eskdale, where 7km of rail track was undermined and badly damaged during Cyclone Gabrielle. All of the track that needs removing has now been removed. Work is also underway on a major bridge north of Waipunga, which needs foundation works to prevent it collapsing.

KiwiRail is working on a scoping study to understand the cost of line reinstatement/resilience improvements or alternatively mothballing (kept in okay condition so it could potentially be used again). This will be provided to the Government, for consideration, in due course.

On the already mothballed rail line north of Wairoa, KiwiRail has removed the majority of rail track through the township of Nūhaka as well as a bridge over the stream just south of it. KiwiRail has done this work in consultation with Wairoa District Council, Hawke's Bay Regional Council and the local community. It will make it easier for the councils to improve drainage in this area via open channels through the rail corridor and potentially help lessen flood risks in the area.

The Nūhaka township is next to the Nūhaka River and the flooding during Cyclone Gabrielle and again in November 2023 impacted homes, the local school and marae.

On the mothballed line just south of Waikokopu, KiwiRail is removing a 300 metre section of track that will allow the local road to Mahia Peninsula to move further into the rail corridor. Removing the track means that the road can now move even further away from the coastline and potentially be made two lanes again. KiwiRail is working closely with Wairoa District Council on this.



Removing the damaged rail line at Nūhaka

Whakapā mai ■ Get in touch



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We value your feedback. Please get in touch if you have any questions or thoughts for the team.

This newsletter provides the latest information about the rebuild of state highway and rail networks damaged by Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023. TREC Pānui is produced by the Transport Rebuild East Coast (TREC) Alliance.