



New Ōpaoa River Bridge



Project update

Underground services have been successfully relocated and the stone column ground improvement work is now complete on the New Ōpaoa River Bridge project near Blenheim. With the bridge pier piling now underway, construction is starting in earnest and people will start to see the bridge taking shape above ground.

Two-way traffic over the bridge was successfully maintained throughout this work, a priority for the NZ Transport Agency and the project team. However, the ground improvements took a little longer than anticipated, due to the discovery of some historic tree remnants deep underground. The project team expects to make up this time as part of the overall construction programme.

A total budget of \$21 million has been allocated to cover the cost of bridge construction, professional services and moving the telecommunications cables in the vicinity.

Completion is scheduled for mid-2020, including road realignment and landscaping. The existing bridge, a Heritage NZ Category 1 Heritage Place, will be retained for pedestrians and cyclists.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- Improved traffic flow for freight and light vehicles.
- A safer bridge structure that is more resilient to natural hazards – making State Highway 1 more secure as New Zealand's key freight route, connecting the North and South Islands.
- Easier access for people in Marlborough to travel into central Blenheim.

Construction activity on site

The project team has been busy installing the main pier piles to support the bridge, driving in seven large 2.1m diameter steel cylinders 26 metres down to a strong gravel layer. The cylinders will then be filled with reinforced concrete. The completion of this work is a key milestone for the project as bridge construction above ground can then start in earnest.

In accordance with robust resource consent conditions for the project, measures are in place to minimise any disturbance to the river. This meant no work was carried out in the flowing channel of the river during the spawning season (1 March to 30 April). Other measures include reducing sediment run off entering the Ōpaoa River or council stormwater systems by filtering the dirty water and the installation of a temporary river crossing to reduce river disturbance.

Upcoming work

The next step involves constructing the pier columns and headstocks on top of the piles, with phased completion in July. Precast concrete beams will then be delivered and installed during August and September.

While the piers are constructed, work on the bridge abutments will start with steel H piles driven deep into the ground. Preparation for these has started on-site and will be completed in time for the precast concrete beams' arrival in August and September. After the headstocks and abutments are completed, 72 bridge concrete beams will be craned into place. These large 1.2m wide concrete beams, ranging from 21m to 26m long, will be trucked in from Christchurch.



A steel pile cylinder is craned into position before it's driven 26m into the ground



A temporary work platform gives the project team access across the river during construction to reduce river disturbance. The yellow oil boom is in place to prevent contaminants entering the waterway.

Landscaping plans discussed at hui

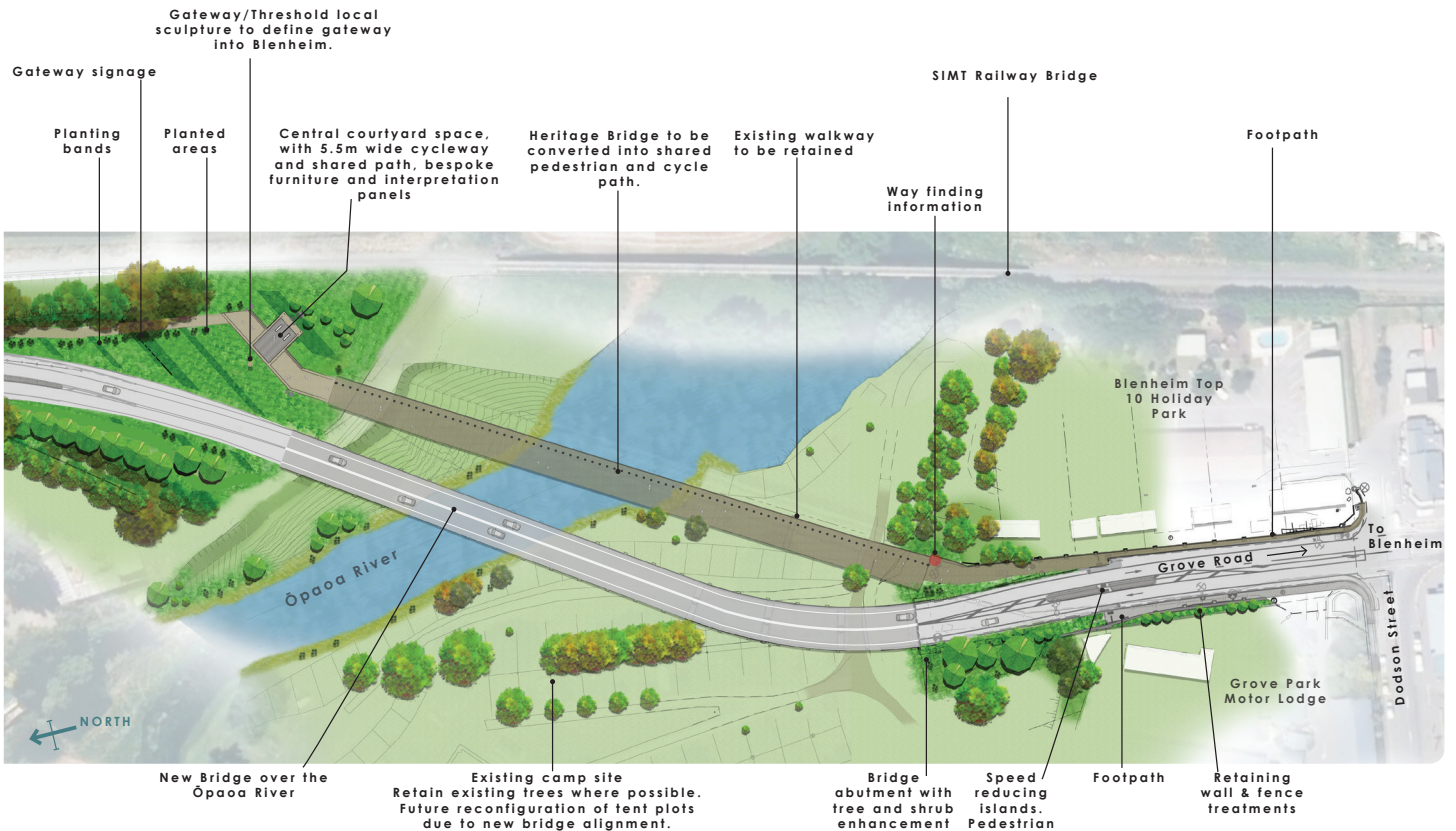
Mana whenua iwi – Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa – met with New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and Marlborough District Council (MDC) in early April to discuss gateway landscaping for the New Ōpaoa River Bridge.

Retention of the heritage bridge as a shared pathway and the proximity to Blenheim’s CBD is anticipated to make the gateway a popular recreational destination. MDC is now prioritising this northern gateway as one of three gateways planned for Blenheim.

The MDC-commissioned Ōpaoa Gateway draft design incorporates an overarching theme of harakeke/flax. Flax and other indigenous native plants and trees are suggested to make up the extensive planting areas that cover both sides of the highway. On the northern side of the bridge, a proposed welcoming entrance statement wall, viewed from the highway, may include the Māori name for Blenheim – Te Waiharakeke – and feature a weaving motif within the concrete wall structure.

To continue the harakeke theme, a flax motif has been designed for use on the internal concrete barriers of the new bridge.

Mana whenua will discuss the draft design plan with their iwi and bring back ideas to be incorporated into the final design.



Visit the project page on our website, for more information about this new bridge: www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/new-opaoa-river-bridge

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