

19 August 2022

Philip Hope
Chief Executive Officer
Eastland Wood Council
philip@eastlandwood.co.nz

Ref. NZT-7765

Dear Philip

Thank you for your emails of 23 July and 2 August 2022 to Hon Kieran McNulty, Associate Minister of Transport, regarding maintenance and state highway infrastructure improvements in the Tairāwhiti region, and consultation with your organisation and other key stakeholders. Given your request for consultation, Minister McNulty has referred your correspondence to Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency for response.

Waka Kotahi recognises that both SH35 and SH2 are critical lifelines to people, whānau and businesses on the East Coast, and that engagement and consultation is vital to actively bring the community and their voices into decisions that directly affect the local roading network.

Local knowledge is invaluable when making decisions. We appreciate the time Eastland Wood Council representatives and its member organisations have taken to attend workshops, planning sessions and our most recent freight forum, to provide key network feedback and insights.

Three years ago, the Connecting Tairāwhiti – Resilience project was initiated and secured \$13.5m funding from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) to strengthen and stabilise SH35. The assessment took place between Gisborne and Potaka and created a long list of sites, which were rationalised to 14 sites. We worked closely with mana whenua and key partners, including Eastland Wood Council, to help us make sure we were selecting and prioritising sites in the correct manner.

The criteria took into account various factors such as previous closures, the likelihood of future closures, volumes of heavy vehicles using the road, environmental opportunities, such as large scale planting or carbon sinking, and previous and forecast maintenance costs.

We know that not all sites will be 'treatable' within this project scope, due to scale and costs required, however, we can use the information we get from investigations and community views, such as your feedback, to help us plan for future works. More information on the project can be found here: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/connecting-tairawhiti/sh35-resilience/>

As you will be well aware, the recent weather events the region has experienced caused major damage to the roading network, particularly to a number of the resilience projects that were underway.

Our teams worked to keep our network operating, and while it will take some time, restoring and maintaining safe access remains our top priority.

Our summer construction season will get underway in September with a number of remedial emergency works and new capital works in the pipeline. Our teams are currently working through assessments, designs, consents and construction planning for these sites and will be able to provide more detail for you at the next freight forum planned for September 2022.

Waka Kotahi values the feedback received from yourself on behalf of the Eastland Wood Council and we hope to see you at next month's freight forum. If you have any further comments or concerns, you are welcome to contact myself by email at jaclyn.hankin@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hankin', written in a cursive style.

Jaclyn Hankin
Regional Manager Maintenance and Operations