



Ahaura River Bridge replacement project



WORK IS UNDERWAY

Work on the Ahaura Bridge replacement is underway. Once complete, the replacement bridge will improve travel times and road safety for all road users and increase the resilience and reliability of State Highway 7 – a key inland link from Westport to Greymouth.

Additional improvements include a pedestrian path on the upstream side of the new bridge, a shoulder for cyclists, pedestrian crossing facilities in Ahaura township and improvements to the intersection of Camp Street and Clifton Street.

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

- › The construction contract was awarded to HEB Construction Ltd in December 2019.
- › Archaeological investigations are underway to identify and record any historical finds.
- › Work will start soon on the new bridge piles and abutments.
- › A temporary 'staging' bridge will allow construction to take place over the river.
- › The new bridge is expected to be complete by mid-2021.
- › Further updates will be provided as work progresses.

Getting ready for construction

Machinery, equipment and materials are being organised and brought to the site. As the team prepares for construction, archaeological investigations are underway. At the same time, work to protect the environment is taking place. Once archaeological investigations are complete, construction of the bridge abutments and piles will start.

Ground work

The bridge piles consist of two 1.8m diameter reinforced concrete piles with steel casings. The piles will be constructed by driving the steel casing into the ground, digging the earth out of the casing and installing the steel reinforcing and concrete.

Staging bridge

A temporary steel and timber 'staging bridge' will be installed from the southern abutment out approximately half way across the river bed. The staging bridge will provide access to construction equipment over the river. When the new Ahaura Bridge is complete, the staging bridge will be completely removed.

Unearthing history

The replacement Ahaura River Bridge project is being carried out under an Archaeological Authority issued by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

A study of the site suggests evidence of early Māori camping sites could potentially be uncovered as Ahaura was a meeting place and stop over point through to Greymouth.

An archaeologist is on-site to help uncover, record and analyse any historical findings.

Already we know there are remains of the St Mary's Catholic Church (1898) and there could be remains from St Mary's Convent, established in 1872.

Evidence of the first Ahaura Bridge (1879) might be found as well as evidence of early European settlement - Gough's Farm - where the original but modified stables, remain untouched and fenced off.



Archaeologist TJ O'Connell clearing vegetation.



WSP Senior Planner Anne McNoe helps clear St Mary's Church steps.



A digger strips back topsoil alongside Gough's stables.

Unearthing history continued

Scene at Ahaura with St Mary's Catholic Church in the foreground and the presbytery in the background. Date unknown, circa 1910. Photographer unidentified. Alexander Turnbull Library, Reference 1/2-055658-F.



St Mary's Convent and the first boarding school, known as the Academy. The image is taken from a large gravel embankment that forms the northern approach to the Ahaura bridge (ca. 1870s-1880s). Alexander Turnbull Library, Reference 1/2-018516-F.

A photo from 1931, showing the 'new' Ahaura bridge under construction alongside the original bridge on the right. West Coast NZ History, image number 15203.



QUICK FACTS

- › The replacement Ahaura River Bridge project will cost \$25 million.
- › Construction will take around 18 months.
- › Once the new bridge has opened the old bridge will be deconstructed.
- › The new bridge will be two lanes and 218m long.
- › The pedestrian path across the bridge will be separated by concrete barriers between the path and the carriageway.
- › 225m of new stormwater pipes will be installed to drain rainwater off the bridge and road carriageway.
- › 900m of new kerb and channel will be constructed – some replacement, some new.
- › Two new pedestrian crossing refuges will be constructed on Camp Street.

Protecting Ahaura waterways

As part of project consent and before any construction starts, a study of the local environment is completed by an ecologist, and a plan developed on how the environment can be protected. The ecologist is on-site as required, to advise and oversee work.

These steps will help to protect waterways:

- › Installing a bund alongside waterways where gravel is being shifted.
- › A water truck to minimise dust.
- › Installing silt fences.
- › Sediment ponds to collect site stormwater.
- › Maintaining a 'buffer zone' of undisturbed ground alongside waterways.
- › Installing a culvert on the southside of the Ahaura Stream to keep machinery out.

The project will also include significant replanting of the Ahaura River and stream riparian margins.



To protect Ahaura Stream from trucks and equipment coming on-site, a temporary culvert was put in place and the stream was diverted. Contractors helped to safely relocate fish from the stream.



A screen protects fish while a pump redirects water from Ahaura Stream as part of ecology protection measures.



KEEP OUT AND STAY SAFE

The Ahaura River Replacement Bridge Project is a construction site. Only authorised workers have access to the site, including during archaeology investigations.

The site is fenced off and warning signs are in place to protect workers and keep members of the public safe, while work is underway. We understand there is public interest in the project. We intend to share news of any significant findings and provide the community with updates on progress.



MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the SH7 Ahaura River Bridge replacement project, visit our website www.nzta.govt.nz/sh7-ahaura-river-bridge-replacement

