Welcome to our first news update for 2018. The summer season so far has seen the largest ever daily vehicle number (2586) through the tunnel. This occurred twice – just after New Year’s Day and again during Chinese New Year in February. It has been a busy few months on the Milford Road, with the alliance team fully focused on keeping traffic flowing and sorting problems as they occur.

We are preparing for the winter season with maintenance on our weather stations and alpine equipment. Below are a few projects we have underway or have recently completed.

We will be watching closely as the work of the recently formed Milford Opportunities group develops over the coming months. If you have any questions or comments please email us at office@milfordroad.co.nz.

**Rocking it**

Maintenance essential to the safe and smooth operation of the Homer Tunnel often needs to happen at night when traffic is light and minimises disruption for road users.

One of our recent overnight tasks involved removing loose rock from various sections of this natural rock lined tunnel. As you can see from this photo it is mostly undertaken by hand in close proximity.

Over time, pieces of rock along the tunnel shift and need to be levered off for the safety of tunnel users. It’s a task involving hard manual work. Machinery is used to lift maintenance crews into the tunnel roof and sides, where they use an array of tools to chip off loose rock that could break away. Four nights were needed to finish this job that saw around 20 tonnes of loose rock removed from the tunnel.

Working nights meant the job was done faster and with minimal disruptions for tunnel users. As the only road link to Milford Sound, it’s an economic life-line for businesses, locals and visitors. While inside the tunnel they also replaced lighting and cleaned signs.
Going digital
Technology is playing a major hand in improving safety for Milford Road travellers. The Milford Alliance is working on a digitalisation project that captures, manages and records important information about this route, ranging from rock falls and avalanches to vehicle crashes.

Risks are mapped in a geographic information system and stored for easy future reference. The project includes handheld devices for road crew and avalanche forecast teams to use out in the field to instantly record and have ‘live’ information available to help the wider team with decision making and reporting.

The alliance team is also working with and sharing information and research with several overseas avalanche programmes, to further enhance avalanche work.

Tunnel vision
Work is underway on replacing the 50-year-old Homer Tunnel operations building alongside SH94 in the upper Hollyford Valley.

Known locally as ‘The Chapel’, it’s clocked up many years of faithful service as the tunnel operations hub that’s included avalanche monitoring of the surrounding mountains. Originally built as a base for a grader, it’s now too small for the current operational demands of the Homer Tunnel and wider alpine area. A replacement building is being constructed across the highway from ‘The Chapel’ which will be removed once the new building opens late in 2018.

Sealed and delivered
The Milford Road Alliance and Southland District Council worked together to upgrade and resurface the first kilometre of the Hollyford Road, to the Lake Marian carpark. A second surface will be laid prior to winter on a route accessing popular walks and scenic areas in the lower Hollyford Valley.

The work coincided with the upgrading of the Lake Marian track carpark. Together, these improvements make it easier for visitors to explore the scenery on the Milford Road area of the Fiordland National Park.

MORE INFORMATION
To keep better informed about what is happening on the Milford Road and when closures for maintenance are likely:

- Visit our website: www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic
- Phone 0800 4 HIGHWAYS (0800 44 44 49)
- Plan your journey at: www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz
- You can also follow us on Facebook & Twitter: www.facebook.com/nztasouthland and Twitter: twitter.com/NZTACWC

Milford Road

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