Managing the Impact of Construction

The Waterview Connection project is complex and of a scale not seen in New Zealand before. The works require careful management. We work hard to minimise any disruption to local residents and businesses, to keep traffic moving around our work sites and to keep people informed about what’s coming up.

We have a suite of environmental management plans that set out how we will manage impacts of construction on our neighbours and the environment. These have all been reviewed and approved by Auckland Council, which is responsible for ensuring we do what we said we would and get any additional approvals when necessary.

The management plans deal with issues ranging from construction noise to the location of construction yards and the management of archaeological sites. They also set out how construction effects will be monitored and reported.

The issues below are those that arise most as concerns for the community.

**Working hours**

Work is permitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as long as any noise created is within the limits set by the Board of Inquiry for the time of day.

Under these rules, most work is done between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm Monday to Saturday when the noise limits are most generous.

The noise limits reduce significantly in the Owairaka area after 8.00 pm and on Sundays and public holidays. So while work can go on, it must be quieter.

There are times when noisier work outside of normal hours is unavoidable. For example, resealing a busy road may only be done at night, with the road closed. To try to do it during the day would result in traffic chaos. On these occasions we must apply to Auckland Council for special permission to do the work. We also tell anyone likely to be affected by the noise.

**Noise**

Noise limits were set for the project by the Board of Inquiry. They stipulate the maximum noise levels allowed at particular times of the day.

**How do the noise walls work?**

Temporary noise walls up to 4 meters high have been built wherever practicable around the perimeter of our work sites. The walls work by reducing noise reaching nearby homes. These are most effective when you cannot see the noisy activity. On our work sites the noise walls have been designed to reduce noise by up to 10dB. The higher the wall, the more noise is blocked.
As noted above, the noise limits are most generous during normal working hours from Monday to Saturday. For example, most construction activities can be done during normal work hours from Monday to Saturday. The noise limits after 8.00 pm, on Sundays and on public holidays are lower, which means any activity on the work sites must be quieter.

Some of the things we do and have done to reduce disturbance for neighbours are:

- build temporary noise walls to reduce the noise reaching nearby homes
- replace vehicle reversing beepers with ‘squawkers’ at night
- replace noisy and continuous rock breaking with blasting where possible
- brief the work teams on the behaviours expected of them on night works, to minimise unnecessary noise e.g. no shouting or slamming vehicle doors
- undertake regular noise monitoring to ensure any noise is within the permitted limits
- initiate a 24-hour freephone (0508 TUNNEL) and process of responding to complaints about noise (and other issues), regardless of the time of day.

Traffic

The Well-Connected Alliance team includes traffic management experts whose job is to ensure the road network around the project operates as efficiently and safely as possible during construction. Our traffic management teams also respond promptly to any incidents or issues involving traffic.
Some changes to traffic conditions are required from time to time. Generally these are to keep motorists and pedestrians safe while we work on or near local roads. For example, a temporary diversion was created on Richardson Road so that we could build a new motorway over bridge.

Over the first 18 months of construction the priority was establishing a system of haul roads within our work sites. At the southern (Owairaka) site, this included building a direct connection to State Highway 20. This means construction traffic can now get to and from State Highway 20 without going on local roads at all – a real bonus now that the 56,000 truck movements needed to remove material excavated from the tunnels are well underway.

Some heavy vehicles will still use local roads, particularly if they are coming from the north. Following some issues with trucks using and idling on side streets, drivers are being instructed to keep to approved routes only.

Suppressing dust

Suppressing dust has been challenging for the Waterview Connection project and – at times – a nuisance for neighbours over the dry summer months. As far as possible we have minimized dust drifting beyond our site boundaries, using up to three water tankers at any one time to dampen down the dust.

Dust levels are continually monitored so that action can be taken quickly to reduce dust when potential issues occur. While the dust over summer was on occasion a nuisance for neighbours of the site, as far as possible we have minimised off site dust emissions and the dust levels beyond the site boundary remained within the permitted levels.

We will continue to monitor dust levels and call in the water tankers when necessary.

Keeping mud where it belongs

Mud can cause problems for the project and its neighbours in wet weather. To keep it on site, where it belongs, we have wheel washers at the main site exits.

Every vehicle that has picked up mud on site is required to have its wheels water-blasted before exiting onto a local road.

Continuous improvement

Participants in the Well-Connected Alliance, which is delivering the Waterview Connection, have extensive national and international experience of construction. That doesn’t mean we have all the answers, always.
We maintain thorough records of any complaints and concerns we hear from the community and of what we did to resolve the issues. We are constantly learning and improving the ways we manage construction effects.

It is important that people in the community continue to call our 0508 TUNNEL help line if they have concerns or questions.

Using our 0508 TUNNEL line

This number is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by the project’s Communications and Stakeholder Management team. Generally it will be answered by the person rostered to look after it. If you get a recorded message, please leave a message – we will get back to you as quickly as possible.

If you have an urgent concern or complaint, it is important that you call us immediately. Don’t, for example, put up with unreasonable noise just because it is past midnight. If we know about the noise when it is happening, we will be able to do something about it.

If your concern is not urgent, you may like to email us on info@wellconnected.co.nz

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