

E-connect

A bi-monthly update on Environment Canterbury people and their activities.

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Earthquakes cause havoc for stopbank programme

The Canterbury earthquakes over the past year have caused problems for infrastructure in the region – including the stopbanks that protect Christchurch city and nearby Kaiapoi from flooding.

Principal River Engineer Ian Heslop says the damage from the earthquakes was a unique challenge for Environment Canterbury's River Engineering team, and the repairs required a lot of analysis and questioning to ensure the right approach was being taken.

After the September earthquake 22kms of stopbank along the banks of the Kaiapoi and Waimakariri Rivers were affected; 40% of which suffered significant structural damage.

The River Engineering team worked with Rileys Consulting to come up with a plan of attack, prioritising the repair programme and the approach for different stopbanks. Ian says some stopbanks were able to be repaired, but others had to be totally reconstructed, which was a sizeable job. The \$5.6 million repair work was paid for by a combination of flood damage reserves and Government Civil Defence and Emergency Management funding.

Fourteen months on, Ian says most of the repair work is now complete, but in some of the Kaiapoi red zone areas lightly damaged stopbanks will remain until land issues are resolved. "We won't be able to complete repairs until the adjoining houses are demolished and the land is fixed. But damage to these stopbanks is minor and the flood risk is minimal."

Andre Claydon, foreman of the Kainga River Engineering team worked on the ground to repair the stopbanks. He says "one of our first jobs was to go out to Kaiapoi and tidy up the tops of the banks. This made it safer for people to walk along as there were a lot of people having a look at the damage. In some areas we had to fence them off. It was a safety issue first and foremost."

By February the team had completed about 80% of the repairs, but the February earthquake overturned much of their progress. "We had to start again with around 70% of the work we had done."

One of the biggest challenges was dealing with neighbours living near stopbanks. Andre says consulting with residents was critical to ensure the community supported the work. The patience and tolerance shown by these people was a greatly appreciated.

"Especially in the built up areas there were people to deal with our machinery shaking their homes. We did a lot of talking and assurances

Waimakariri River bank damage



were given because the work had to be done, but people's houses were still being shaken."

Ian says while it's been a testing year, Environment Canterbury's River Engineering team was well prepared because of the constant flood threat the city lives with. "It was very similar to a flood response, even if the type of repair was different. We have a lot of experience with flood damage repairs, and always have machinery and staff available on-call."

Everything is connected

Bus travel disrupted but patronage is on the increase again

After the February earthquake the Bus Exchange in the middle of central Christchurch was off limits due to the central city cordon so new, temporary bus interchanges were set up on Hagley and Bealey Avenues.

Security staff were contracted to look after the sites and stationary buses established for staff to issue and reload Metrocards from and for use as passenger waiting rooms. Barely two weeks after the February earthquake, the buses were running again and for the first three weeks the service was offered free of charge to support Christchurch residents.

David Stenhouse, Manager of Environment Canterbury's Passenger Services team says getting the service up and running was one thing, but seeing the winter through in temporary accommodation was another. Staff had to contend with cramped working conditions, and periods of wet and snow, affected morale. "With the snow and rain there were some pretty tough days but the staff, without exception, were remarkable."

By the end of April the Real Time Information (RTI) system was working again. This gave passengers and staff a better idea of the movements of incoming and outgoing buses as there were a considerable number of delays due to changed travel patterns causing severe congestion, says David. While the RTI system increased certainty for passengers, staff at the two temporary interchanges had to continue to brave the cold to direct customers to buses and to provide information regarding connecting journeys. During their breaks staff used the campervans that had been stationed at each site to warm up and relax with their colleagues and this proved a real success.

Ten months down the track, bus patronage is trending the right way. A month after the earthquake patronage slumped 70% on the previous March. Through the winter months it hovered at around 50% of previous winter patronage but in October was only 39% down on October 2010. "Slowly and gradually customers are coming back. We expect the

Central Station



November figures will be even better again," says David. He credits the recovery to the dedication shown by staff working in the Passenger Services team, who put a huge number of hours in to get the network back up and running. While he didn't want to single anyone out, he says the staff on the ground at the two temporary interchanges needed to be commended for taking on different ways of working in often trying circumstances.

Interchange staff are now stationed at a new interchange called Central Station which opened October 25.



Programme Director Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS)

Francis Pauwels considers he is one of the luckiest staff members at Environment Canterbury.

The Programme Director of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) the Environment Canterbury unit charged with implementing the CWMS, believes his team is making a real difference to the region. And he couldn't be prouder or more satisfied.

"There's a huge amount of effort going on behind the scenes with about

150 community people involved across the ten zones and Regional Committee. For me it's a once in a life time opportunity.

Francis came to the role in August after a varied career path which included truck driving, running his own greenhouse businesses, manufacturing, exporting and economic development consulting. He started with a BSC in Biochemistry from Lincoln University and completed an MBA on fast track from Canterbury University. Prior to Environment Canterbury, he consulted with the Marlborough District Council focusing on aquaculture, aviation and viticulture opportunities in the region.

As Programme Director of the CWMS, Francis oversees a team of 12 staff, including seven zone facilitators who work with communities to develop Zone Implementation Programmes (ZIPs). Francis says despite the earthquakes in the past year, the team has stayed on target with

five ZIPs at or near completion and another couple of programmes due in the next few months. His team is now looking at water storage infrastructure and initiatives to protect water quality and the other values associated with the region's waterways.

"Work has started in the Hurunui-Waiapu Zone looking at the implementation programmes on the ground that are needed. It's very exciting and challenging as its relatively new territory for Environment Canterbury. The challenge is that we all want to see real improvements in water quality as well as achieving land and irrigation development across the region."

He isn't under-estimating what it will take to change how water is managed, but says already communities across Canterbury are showing that they can work together on the issues.

"There is a huge amount of dedication out there and people can see we are making progress. The various zones will strike challenges and hurdles along the way but the hearts and minds are in the right place. The other aspect that will be challenging is coming to agreement on what the regional picture for infrastructure could look like and how various zones and companies could work together to get optimal outcomes for the whole region. Work is accelerating in this area."

Commuting from Blenheim every second weekend, Francis says Environment Canterbury is also receptive to new ways of working. "There is an acceptance of commuting and working away from the office. It's not a big deal if people drive or fly in from elsewhere".

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