

Manawatu Gorge team wins Roding New Zealand Excellence Award



The Manawatu Gorge was closed by a large slip in August 2011 and was reopened just 13 months later – the team received a Roding New Zealand Excellence Award in recognition of their hard work

A team effort to reopen the Manawatu Gorge, following the largest road landslide in New Zealand history, has won the Medium Road Project at this year's Roding New Zealand Excellence Awards.

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), MWH Global, Higgins Contractors and BBO responded to the emergency caused by a large slip closing the Manawatu Gorge section of State Highway 3 on 18 August 2011. Two months later, this vital transport link had another destructive landslide in the same spot.

The team overcame significant challenges in a complex situation. Safety and cost were balanced with the need to quickly reopen the road, while also providing the best alternative routes.

The gorge is the main artery for the flow of imports and exports between the Port of Napier, the Hawke's Bay region, and the Mana-

watu, Wanganui and Horowhenua areas. While closed, all traffic had to detour via the Saddle Road linking Ashhurst and Woodville or the Pahiatua Track between Aokautere and Pahiatua, adding at least 15 minutes to the journey each way. "We cleared the slip and rebuilt the road as quickly as possible," says Mike Skelton, local transportation group manager for MWH Global. "Getting the traffic back through the gorge was vital in order to achieve our overall objective of allowing residents and businesses in the affected communities to 'get their lives back'. Throughout the 13 months of the project one of our top priorities was ensuring safe travel on alternative routes

and through the gorge whilst keeping the public fully informed of progress."

No further slips

The Manawatu Gorge section of SH3 is one of the most difficult roads in New Zealand to maintain. The narrow road is cut into the southern side of the gorge and is perched 20m above the Manawatu River.

"I am delighted that the team's efforts have been recognised," says Mark Martin, group maintenance engineer, Higgins Contractors. "Working around the clock seven days a week in difficult winter conditions allowed the road to be opened four months ahead of schedule. What's more, the gorge has been hit by heavy rainfall a number of times since and there have been no further slips."

The completion of the project in November 2012 was summed up by David McGonigal, NZTA state highways regional manager, who says the team did a great job under pressure. "The crew stuck at the task for a long time, and they can now reflect on a job well done. They've rebuilt an entirely new piece of highway in a superbly orchestrated blur of activity, and words can't express the value of their hard work for the Manawatu region and beyond. Every cliché about true grit and Kiwi 'number eight wire' ingenuity comes to mind, but at the end of the day, they had a job to do – a huge job – and they did it."

Throughout the project, the team ensured the native environment was protected and also constructed a forest lookout at the top of the slip for the community to enjoy.

New border system launched

Customs and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) have launched the next stage of their new electronic border system, heralding the start of a smarter, swifter border for goods to pass in and out of New Zealand.

The new system, known as the Joint Border Management System (JBMS), is being delivered in a phased programme of releases so that each part can be thoroughly tested first.

"We are grateful to industry partners for working with us to pilot the system, as it means we have an iron-clad process for making sure it works in real life before we switch it on," says Robert Lake, Customs deputy comptroller transformation and technology.

The first stage of the JBMS includes the Trade Single Window, which will ultimately let exporters and importers send all shipment details electronically to one place, rather

than to several government agencies. It also lets companies connect to Customs and the MPI directly if they choose to do so, rather than going through an intermediary. MPI deputy director-general verification and services, Roger Smith, says the JBMS is a key component of a strong New Zealand border for the future. "JBMS will deliver significant benefits to the economy through greater efficiency, reduced costs and better risk management,

and it is a key contributor to the government's goal for better public services through online services," he says.

Industry can choose to transfer over to the new system now, or they can continue to use the existing border systems until the new system becomes mandatory after December 2014.

For further information, visit www.customs.govt.nz