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**Te Reinga Bridge repairs prioritised**

The Wairoa District Council is directing all possible resources into repairing the Te Reinga Bridge and improving connectivity for the community.

On Tuesday (05.04.22) the bridge was closed to allvehicles due to significant damage. Yesterday, site investigations revealed the current state of the bridge is unusable to any form of traffic, including pedestrians.

Two of the bridge piers have significantly subsided which has compromised its structural integrity placing the bridge in a high risk and danger category. There is potential for the bridge to be closed for three to six months, possibly longer, to enable the repair work to be carried out.

Council has rolled out a simultaneous three-pronged priority approach of repairing the existing bridge, regaining pedestrian access as soon as possible and ramping up the weather-related repair work on the alternativedetour route ofErepiti Road/Ohuka Road and State Highway 38.

Wairoa District Council Chief Executive Kitea Tipuna said Council is very aware that this bridge is the gateway to Ruakituri and its closure affects hundreds of people. There are pressures for stock movement, forestry machinery, and all the people of Ruakituri Valley.

“We want to regain pedestrian access as soon as possible and we are considering a range of options. We have begun work on a bridge repair design and formed a project emergency response plan to ensure we are tackling this issue at high speed. A project team to manage the design and repair of this bridge has been formed, drawing on local and out of town expertise and knowledge.

“This is a huge inconvenience for everyone, and we are doing everything we can and considering all options to ensure we can fast track this project and look after affected parties on the way.

“We have also ramped up inspections and repair plans related to the recent heavy rain event on the alternative Ohuka link road routes to ensure we can cope with the extra traffic diverted along that road. The alternative route will need to take additional pressure and while there is access, some areas are marginal and will need work.

“We understand the importance of connectivity for these communities. Many of the affected people have already been isolated due to the heavy rain event so this is another blow. We are fast tracking everything we possibly can and will bring in resources from all over the country to get this repair completed in the fastest possible time.

“This is one of the biggest infrastructure issues Wairoa has faced in a long time and I want to assure the community we are aware of the impacts, and we understand the importance of connectivity to communities and that this closure will affect hundreds of people from farmers, forestry and employees as well as schooling and the marae.

“We also need to stress that as well as no vehicle access pedestrians need to also please stay off the bridge and people need to stay away from the underneath of the bridge.”

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little said this is a huge blow and his heart goes out to the community. “I know what it’s like to lose access, we lost our bridge on SH38 and it was a very disruptive time. While there is an alternative route it is a lot further to travel and inconvenient. There is no one to blame for this, it is just one of those things where we are battling mother nature and she’s won this time.

“Council has been carrying out bridge strengthening work on a series of bridges on the Ruakituri Road, and the Te Reinga Bridge had been assessed and identified as not needing any work.

“It is still not known what has caused the damage, it may have been the recent rainfall event or the 4.4 magnitude earthquake that was in the vicinity, 35km from Wairoa, on Friday March 25, at 10:55 pm. Geotech investigations and underwater assessment will be carried out to determine what has caused this issue.”

Mr Little thanked the community for their continued patience and reminded everyone to please stay away from the bridge.

* **For further information please contact the Wairoa District Council on 06 838 7309**