

# ARAPUNI DAM ENHANCEMENT WORK

April 2026 Newsletter



Mercury Stakeholder Manager Larnie Chrystall and Mercury Programme Manager, Major Civil, Tom Newson, with some of the info boards used to detail the Arapuni Hydro Dam project at the community drop-in, at Rhubarb Cafe on 11 April.

## KIA ORA ANŌ, HELLO AGAIN.

This is our fifth newsletter to update the community on our work at the Arapuni Hydro Dam in South Waikato.

We are well into our relief drainage work at the bottom of the dam and expect to be finished by late June. We'll then be preparing the project site for the main works which, will involve closing the road across the dam.



Please forward this to anyone who might be interested. People can request to join our mailing list by emailing: [project.arapuni@mercury.co.nz](mailto:project.arapuni@mercury.co.nz)

## PROJECT RECAP

The Arapuni Hydro Dam is safe for everyday use but work needs to be done to improve the left abutment (pictured below), to protect it from the risk of water seepage and internal erosion.

We started early works in 2024 and we are finalising modern engineering options to reduce the risk of further seepage occurring. We expect to begin resetting the project site for the main works programme in June 2026.





**1 & 2**

South Waikato District Council elected members visiting the Arapuni Hydro Dam to learn more about the project, and then taking a tour of the Arapuni Hydro Station.



**3 & 4:**

The relief drainage work at the bottom of the dam: Rory from Alton Drilling operating the drilling rig and Josh from Damwatch recording details of the core samples retrieved from the drilling.



**5 & 6:**

Mercury Geospatial team members, Nicole and Ben, set up for a drone flight over Arapuni Hydro Dam. The drone images helped us map a safe route for a helicopter to deliver supplies to the bottom of the dam for the relief drainage work.



**7 & 8:**

We had a great turnout for our April drop-in at Rhubarb Cafe. Hot topics included operation of the detour route; timing around closing of the road across the dam and access to walking, cycling tracks and fishing spots.

**PROJECT UPDATE**

**DECEMBER 2025:**

A crane was used to establish a new project site at the bottom of the dam, to start our relief drainage work. Relief drainage is used to help reduce pore water pressure in the dam foundation and abutments. They will also help to manage construction induced pressures during the repairs.

**JANUARY 2026:**

We started relief drainage at the bottom of the dam with our contractors Alton Drilling leading this work.

**FEBRUARY 2026:**

We began to make good progress with the relief drainage work. The crane returned to deliver more supplies to the team working at the bottom of the dam. We hosted a site visit of the dam for elected members from the South Waikato District Council, to bring them up to speed on the project. They also enjoyed a tour of the nearby Arapuni Hydro Station, thanks to our station staff there.

**MARCH 2026:**

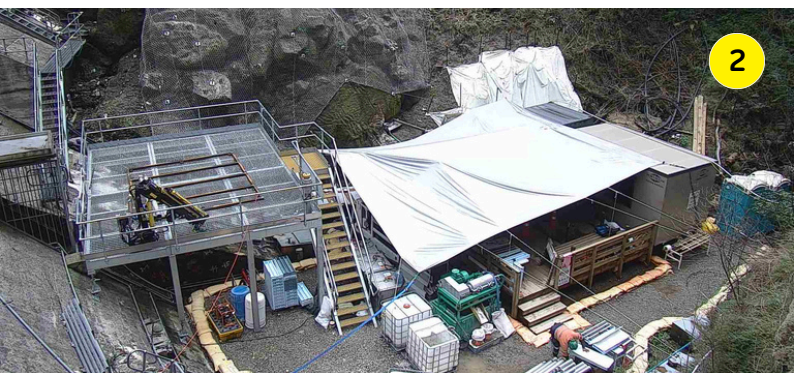
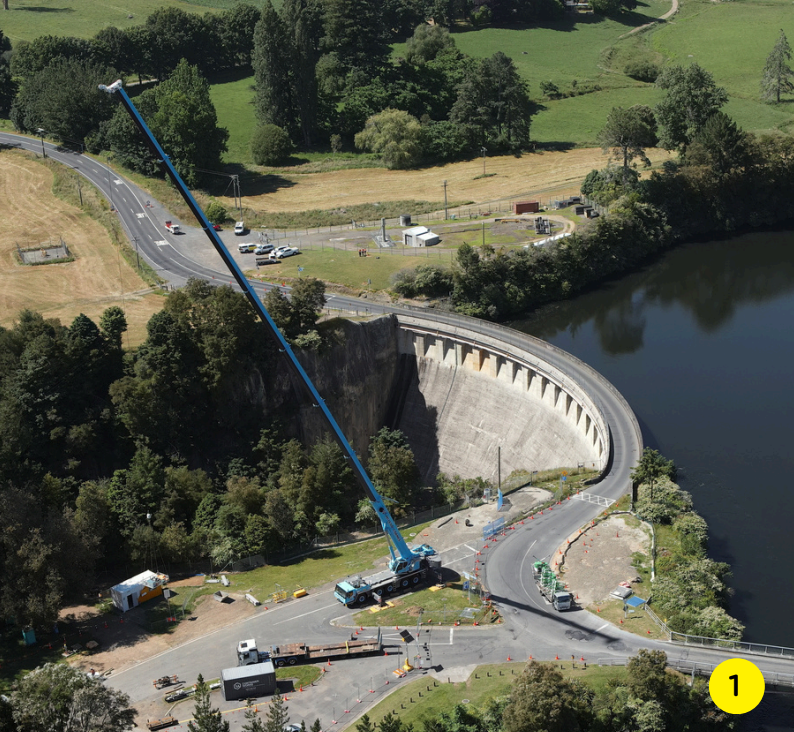
We had Skywork Helicopters deliver supplies and equipment to the bottom of the dam for our team working on the relief drainage project.

**APRIL 2026:**

We held our fourth community drop-in session at Rhubarb Cafe to update everyone on the main works programme which kicks off in May-June. We started upgrades to Powerhouse Road, between the Arapuni Road intersection and the lower bridge across the Waikato River, to prepare it for use as a temporary detour route during the main works.

**HELP US KEEP OUR TEAM SAFE**

We have a team working at the bottom of the dam. Recently, several stones were thrown in that area, creating a serious safety risk for our team. To help prevent this behaviour and improve safety, warning signs and additional cameras have been installed. Please stay alert and report any concerns.



## MOVERS AND SHAKERS

### OVER THE TOP

(1) We've had McLeod Cranes on site in December and February, to lift heavy equipment to the bottom of the dam where we set up a new work site (2) for our relief drainage drilling work. Did you see their crane reaching over the top of the dam?

### HEAVY LIFTING:

(3) You may have seen Skywork Helicopters flying in new supplies and equipment for our relief drainage team at the bottom of the dam in late March. In one day the pilot made 82 deliveries from our depot (4) to the dam.

### DRILLING CREW ROCKS

The hard work drilling into rock at the bottom of the dam is being led by Alton Drilling (5). The core samples (6) we retrieved from the drilling help us understand the geology in the left abutment.



## ☑ FAQs from our April drop-in

### When will the road across the dam close, and the detour opened?

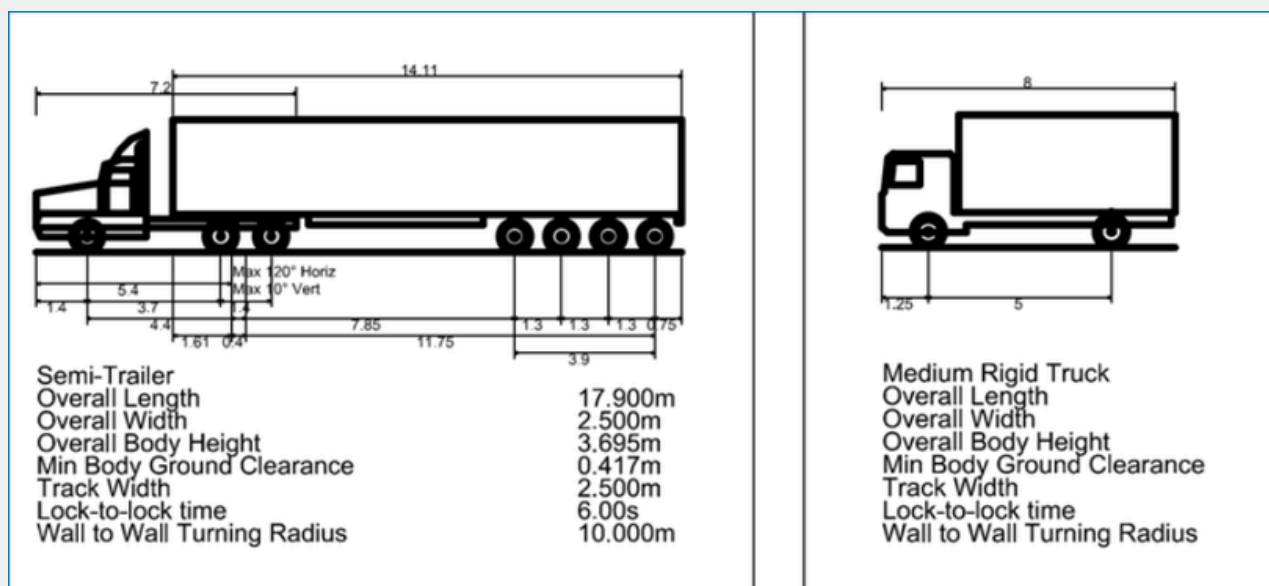
We'll start to set up a new project site on the dam in May 2026. We expect to close the road across the dam before construction starts in July and then the detour will be operational for the duration of the main works, 24-36 months.

### What type of vehicles can use the detour?

Cars, light vehicles, motorcycles, school buses, emergency services, rigid trucks up to 8m can use the detour. High Productivity Motor Vehicles, oversized vehicles and extended freight cannot use the detour.

### What is a rigid truck?

The truck in the picture below on the left is a semi-trailer measuring 17.9m in length, while the truck on the right is a medium rigid truck measuring 8m. The truck on the left is almost twice the length of the truck on the right.



### Why can't heavy or freight vehicles use the detour?

Engineering assessments confirm that Powerhouse Road cannot safely accommodate High Productivity Motor Vehicles or long heavy vehicle units. The detour route has narrow shoulders, tight horizontal geometry, steep gradients, and a one-lane, traffic-light-controlled section. We're asking heavy transport users to plan their journeys and use alternative state highway routes.

### What will the wait times be for the detour?

Compared to crossing the dam, using the detour will add around 10 minutes.

### Will emergency services have access to the detour?

Emergency services will be able to use the detour route under their normal operational protocols.

### Can we still fish from the bridge near the dam?

There will be limited opportunity for parking and to fish from the bridge. All other locations will be restricted during construction, and with the detour in place, as these areas will be closed for safety.

### Why can't cyclists and walkers use the detour route too?

It is not safe to allow cyclists and walkers to share the detour route with the traffic expected to use the road daily. Our technical experts have also recommended closing the western end of the Arapuni swing bridge, where it connects to Powerhouse Road, to keep people safe when the road is used as a detour.

# PLAN YOUR JOURNEY

## LOCAL TRAVEL

The road across Arapuni Dam will be closed when we start the project main works in mid-2026. A detour route for local, essential travel, will be on Powerhouse Road. The western end of the swing bridge connecting to Powerhouse Road will be closed for safety. Waikato River Trail users will need to use alternative crossing points, as they will not be able to travel through Powerhouse Road during the works.

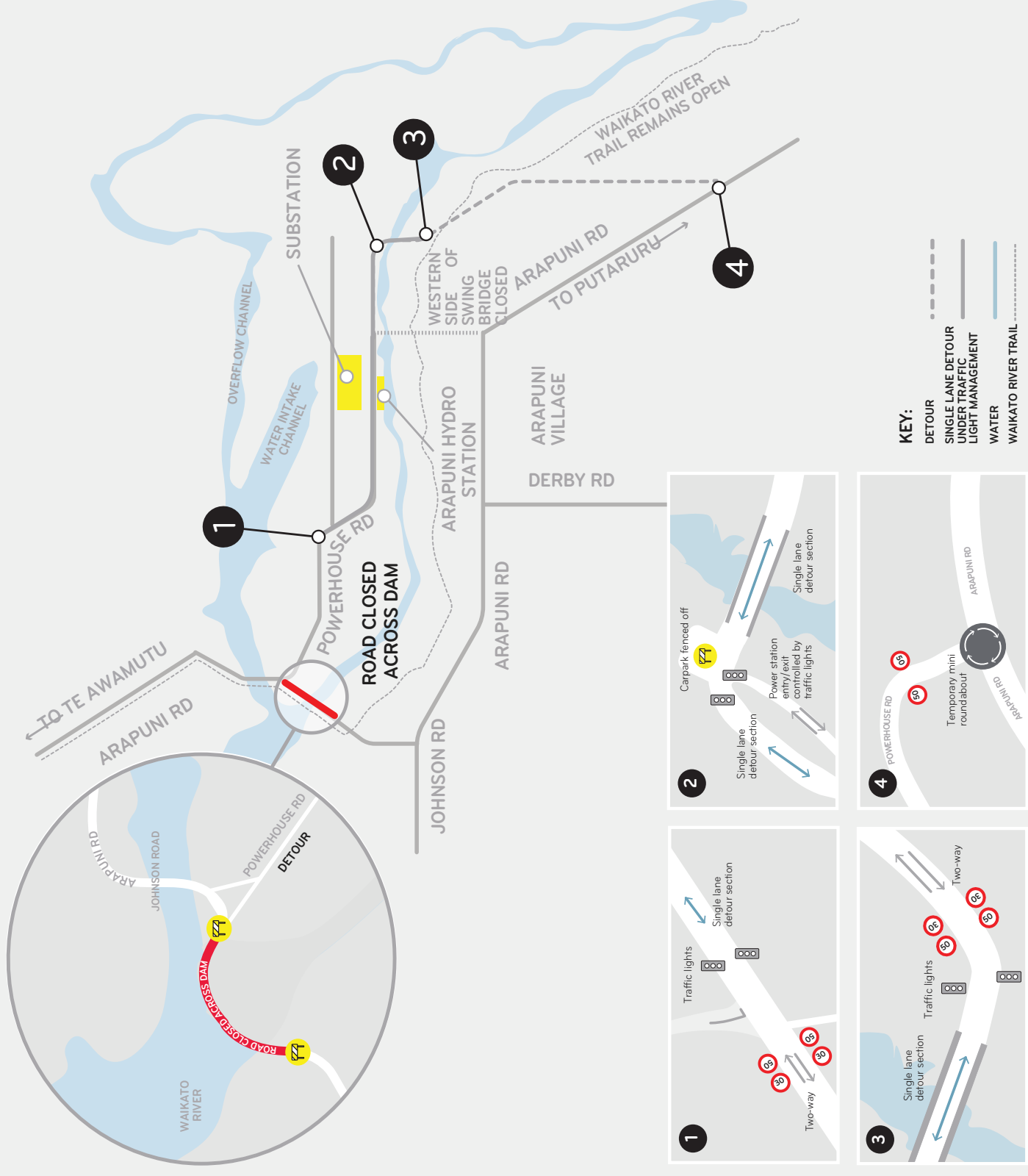


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# PLAN YOUR JOURNEY

## FREIGHT OR HEAVY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

The detour route along Powerhouse Road is not suitable for freight of heavy commercial vehicles. This means all heavy vehicle operators will need to plan their journeys and use alternative routes, on State Highways 3, 21 and 1. This route avoids the physical constraints of Powerhouse Road detour and offers more consistent travel conditions for freight.

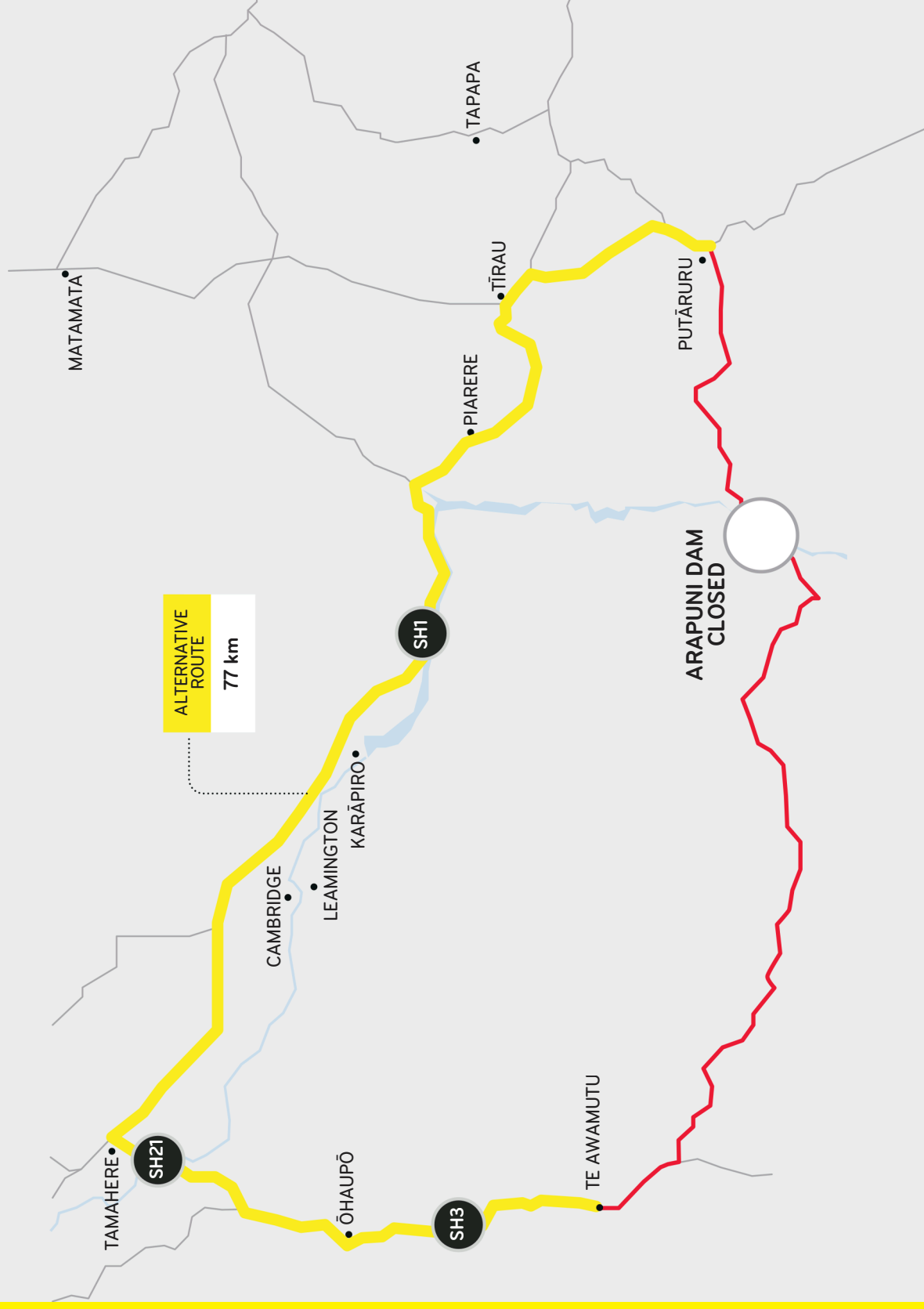


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## TIMELINE

### PHASE 2 ENABLING WORKS.



**APRIL**

- Relief drainage at bottom of the dam continues to June.
- Begin work on upgrades to Powerhouse Road, to prepare it for use as detour route, anticipate 4-5 weeks to complete upgrades.



**MAY**

- Finish upgrades to Powerhouse Road.
- Start work on setting up project site on left and right abutments.
- Prepare for dam road for the closure.
- Relief drainage continues to June.



**JUNE**

- Relief drainage concludes at the bottom of the dam.
- Close the road across the dam.
- Temporary detour route for essential, local travel becomes operational.

### PHASE 3 CONSTRUCTION.



**JULY  
ONWARDS**

- Main works start. Road across dam closed for 24-36 months.
- Keep the community and stakeholders informed on project progress.



#### HOW CAN I TALK TO THE PROJECT TEAM?

As the project progresses, we will continue to engage with stakeholders and local community to let people know what is planned. If you would like to contact the project team, or provide feedback, please email: [project.arapuni@mercury.co.nz](mailto:project.arapuni@mercury.co.nz).

Scan the QR code or follow the link below to view our project webpage:

[www.mercury.co.nz/arapuni-dam-remediation-work](http://www.mercury.co.nz/arapuni-dam-remediation-work)

