

the river and there utilised in the formation of the station-grounds, &c. The vote proposed for the current year is £12,000, which will admit of operations proceeding at a satisfactory rate.

GISBORNE—KARAKA.

This is another of the new lines authorised last year. Work was begun in February, and has been energetically proceeded with since. Much of the formation of the first section—ten miles in length—is already fit for rail-laying, many of the sleepers required for the work have been delivered, and arrangements have been made for the supply of the remainder. The rails have been ordered some time and are shortly expected. As soon as platelaying has been started, a locomotive and wagons will be sent to Gisborne to enable the ballasting to be proceeded with. The vote proposed for the current year is £12,000.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

The works on the Ohinemoa Section have been steadily proceeded with, and have been extended as far as the proposed Kawakawa Station, a distance of sixty miles from Te Awamutu, and 160 miles from Auckland. Every endeavour is being made to push these works on as rapidly as possible; they are, however, of a heavy character, and much of the ground is of an exceedingly treacherous nature, so that really rapid progress is impossible. All that can be done is being done, however, and nearly five miles of the line—as far as Waimiha Station—is expected to be ready for rail-laying by Christmas.

The divided public opinion in the North as to the route by which this railway should be constructed has greatly retarded the work in the past. The central route having now been finally decided upon, works southwards of Kawakawa will be expeditiously proceeded with, the configuration of the country to be traversed admitting of this being done. The works as far as Kawakawa are already fully manned, there being at the present time about three hundred and fifty men at work on that section. A contract is also being prepared for the three bridges over the Ongarue River, and another for the Wanganui Bridge at Taumaranui.

At the southern end of the line grading now extends to Paengaroa, a distance of over twenty-eight miles from the terminus of the opened line at Mangaonoho, and over fifty miles from the junction with the main West Coast Railway at Marton; and instructions have been issued for work on the Turangarere Section to be taken in hand. This section is for the most part at a distance from the main road, so that a service-road will have to be constructed along the greater part of it. This road will be put in hand immediately, in order that the materials required for culverts and other works may be carted over it during the ensuing summer. When the formation of the Turangarere Section is well advanced a further section will be put in hand.

The work at the Makohine Viaduct has been pushed forward as rapidly as possible throughout the year, and considerable progress has been made. The work of preparing the iron and steel for erection is now drawing towards completion. The longer of the two main piers is already erected to its full height, and the other is in hand. As soon as this pier is completed, the erection of the staging to carry the superstructure will be begun, the superstructure itself following on as soon as the staging to support it is ready. As announced in my Statement last year, the department does not intend to await the completion of this viaduct before proceeding with the platelaying beyond it. The sleepers required are being obtained in the district, and a large proportion of them are already stacked along the line. Arrangements will be made for the conveyance of the rails from Mangaonoho Station to the flat ground beyond the viaduct, so that by the time the viaduct is finished the platelaying and ballasting as far as Mangaweka will also be completed, and the railway can then be opened for public traffic without further delay.

The iron and steel for the Mangaweka Viaduct was ordered some months ago and a portion of it is expected shortly. The work of preparing it for use in