

HELENSVILLE NORTHWARDS.

The Tahekeroa Section of this railway, 3 miles 18 chains in length, was completed and handed over to the Railway Department for regular traffic on the 19th December last. Work on the Komokoriki Section has been actively proceeded with, and the line as far as the south end of the tunnel is completed, and the rails laid. More than three-fourths of the excavation in the tunnel has also been done, and the rest of the formation to Ahuroa is well in hand and should not take long to finish. A contract has been let for the supply of bricks for lining the tunnel. I am hopeful of being able to open the section to Ahuroa by about the 31st March next.

The final location of the line beyond the end of the Komokoriki Section is now necessary in order to avoid any delay taking place on the completion of the works on that section, and the survey has accordingly been put in hand. The question has been raised as to whether the route for this railway by the Hoteo Valley is really the best that could be followed. Another route has been examined by a committee of the local settlers, and considered by them to be superior. In order to set this point at rest, instructions have been issued for the newly suggested route to be examined, and on completion of such examination its merits will be carefully compared with those of the route previously proposed.

The expenditure on this railway last year amounted to £11,933, and for the current year an authorisation of £15,000 is proposed.

PAEROA—WAIHI.

Only preliminary work had been done on this line up to the close of the financial year 1899–1900. During last year, however, substantial progress was made, and work now extends for a distance of 6 miles 15 chains. The excavation of the long tunnel is well in hand, the position of the work at the end of September being as follows :—

West end—							
Top heading	...	...	...	...	...	...	741 feet.
Bottom heading	...	...	...	...	...	...	675 "
Bricking	...	...	...	...	...	...	359 "
East end—							
Top heading	...	...	...	...	...	...	469 "
Bottom heading	...	...	...	...	...	...	457 "

An air-shaft has also been sunk at the west end of the tunnel, about 600 ft. from the mouth. Platelaying has been started from the junction siding at Paeroa, and is well in hand towards Karangahake. A contract has been let for the construction of a combined road and railway bridge over the Ohinemuri River at Karangahake, the contract price being £8,771.

The expenditure on the line last year was £12,259, but this year it will be larger; an authority for £20,000 is asked for.

GISBORNE—KARAKA.

In the case of this railway also the only work done prior to the commencement of the late financial year was of a preliminary nature. During the late year, however, very substantial progress has been made, so that at the present time the formation is finished for about 12½ miles; all the bridges for the same distance have been erected, and the rails laid. A ballast-train is busy widening the banks, completing the station-yards, and ballasting. The station-buildings are also actively in progress, and I expect to have the line to Ormond ready for regular traffic by February next. The final location of the balance of the line to Karaka will be taken in hand as soon as a suitable officer can be detailed for the work. The expenditure on this railway last year exceeded the vote by £3,498, having amounted to £15,498. This year it will be even larger, and an authorisation of £20,000 will be required.