

Colin Bond

Chief Executive Officer

New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc. (NZKGI)

25 Miro Street, Mount Maunganui

Date: 28 January 2026

Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport

Subject: Urgent Importance of Reopening SH2 and SH35 for the 2026 Kiwifruit Harvest and Ensuring SH5 Remains Operational

Dear Sir or Madam,

New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc. (NZKGI) is the grower advocacy body representing all of New Zealand's kiwifruit growers. Established in 1994, NZKGI works to advocate for, protect, and enhance the commercial and political interests of growers, and to promote a secure and sustainable kiwifruit industry.

I am writing to draw attention to the significant impact that January's adverse weather events have had on the East Coast kiwifruit growing region, particularly through the closure of State Highways 2 and 35. State Highway 2 through the Waioweka Gorge is a critical transport route for harvested kiwifruit being transported to packing facilities in Ōpōtiki. When that route closes, State Highway 35 becomes an alternative, as does the route south to Napier and across to Taupo via State Highway 5.

The East Coast region currently includes approximately 644 hectares of kiwifruit. Our growers contribute around \$100 million annually to the Gisborne economy, and any increases in transport costs or delays directly affect grower profitability and the wider regional economy.

The Red kiwifruit variety is the first to be harvested each season, with harvest in the Gisborne region expected to commence in mid-February. At the time of writing, the closure of both SH2 and SH35 has left the only viable alternative route via Taupō and Rotorua. This option significantly lengthens travel time, increases freight costs, and introduces logistical challenges during a time-critical harvest period.

If this lifeline were to be inaccessible for an extended period, there will be a material impact on the profitability of the East Coast and also Hawke's Bay harvests, as well as on the

industry's economic contribution to these regions. There is insufficient capacity to pick and pack East Coast and Hawkes Bay fruit from within those regions. The sooner these roads can be safely reopened, the better the outcome for growers, packhouses, transport operators, and regional communities.

NZKGI acknowledges and appreciates the strong communication from Waka Kotahi and Downer, and we recognise the high priority that is being placed on reopening these routes. Nevertheless, we wish to reinforce the critical importance of restoring access as soon as practicable to enable a successful and timely harvest.

The partnership between the kiwifruit industry and government has been fundamental to the growth of New Zealand's largest horticultural export. Together, we have consistently turned challenges into progress, and today growers, regions, and the nation are benefiting from this success.

NZKGI's vision is for New Zealand kiwifruit growers to be the most successful and future-ready producers in the world. Achieving this vision depends on infrastructure that is resilient and capable of supporting harvest and export operations. Maintaining connectivity through these key transport corridors is essential to ensuring the ongoing success of the industry and its contribution to New Zealand's economy.

Yours sincerely,



Colin Bond

Chief Executive Officer

New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc. (NZKGI)

CC: Hon James Meager, Hon Todd McClay, Hon Nicola Grigg, Hon Mark Patterson, Hon Mark Mitchell, Hon Chris Penk, Dana Kirkpatrick, Tom Rutherford, Sam Uffindell, Prakash Narayan, Denis Collins