

RAILWAYS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

The several railway-works that have been under construction during the late financial year are as follows :—

KAMO—KAWAKAWA.

The section of this line between Kamo and Hikurangi, 8 miles in length, was practically completed within the year, and was handed over to the Railway Commissioners for working on the 2nd July last. The expenditure on the line during the year amounted to £8,929, exclusive of the value of permanent-way materials supplied; while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the amount of £5,434 in addition. For the current year it is proposed to ask for a vote of £12,000. A survey has been made of a portion of the proposed extension of this line to Whakapara and Hukerenui. The total length of the proposed extension is 6 miles 35 chains, and it will not be an expensive line to construct. It will open up a large extent of very good land, and it will also tap the far-famed Puhipuhi Kauri Forest. Owing to a large portion of the valuable kauri bush of this forest having been fired some time ago, it is absolutely necessary that the trees should be felled and utilised without further delay, or they will become valueless. The sale of this timber, and the enhanced value given to the Crown land through which the line will pass, will more than pay for its construction, and the Government therefore proposes to ask Parliament to authorise the work. The vote proposed for this year will provide the greater portion of the funds required for the section to Whakapara.

A very largely-signed petition has been presented to the House this session praying for the construction of the entire line between Kawakawa and Hikurangi, so as to establish a connection between the Kawakawa—Opua and the Whangarei—Hikurangi Railways. The construction of this connection may become necessary in the future, but we are unable to see our way to propose to do more this session than I have already indicated.

HELENSVILLE NORTHWARDS.

Practically nothing has been done on this line since my last Statement was delivered, the total expenditure thereon during last financial year having amounted to £329 only. The Makarau Contract is the only work in progress, and on this work the contractors have met with unexpected difficulties in piercing a tunnel. Operations were entirely suspended for a time, but have recently been resumed, and, with the return of fine weather, the contractors will doubtless be able to overcome their difficulties and complete the contract.

The liabilities already existing on account of this railway amount to £8,995, but, as the whole amount is not likely to come in for payment during the current year, a vote of £7,000 is asked for. This also includes a small amount to provide for the commencement of a new section of the line of about three miles in length.

GRAHAMSTOWN—TE AROHA.

The formation of the twelve miles of this railway between the Ohinemuri River and Te Aroha is finished, and the platelaying and ballasting are now in progress, all the rails and sleepers required for the work being already on the ground. The plans for the bridge over the Ohinemuri River have been completed, and the ironwork ordered from England, and on its arrival in the colony the erection of the bridge will be put in hand under a co-operative contract. The formation of the station-yard at Paeroa will be proceeded with directly the Ohinemuri Bridge has been fairly started. The department hopes to be able to have the whole line between Te Aroha and Paeroa—13 miles 3 chains in length—ready for traffic shortly after the end of the current financial year. The expenditure on this railway last year amounted to £5,489, exclusive of the value of rails and sleepers, and a vote for £13,000 is asked for this year.

PUTARURU—ROTORUA.

The section of this railway between Putaruru and Tarukenga—23 miles 5 chains in length—was opened for traffic on the 24th November last, thus enabling tourists to easily reach Rotorua from Auckland in one day. The formation and bridge-works between Tarukenga and the Rotorua terminus, a distance of 8½ miles, have also been completed, and contracts let for the platelaying and ballasting, as well as for the necessary station-buildings. The works on both contracts are actively in progress, and it is confidently expected that the line will be ready for traffic all the way to Rotorua by the 1st December next. The expenditure on this line during last financial year was £18,357, while liabilities to the amount of £5,448 existed at the close of the year. We ask for a vote of £17,000, which will complete one of the most necessary and useful railways in the colony.