

MEDIA RELEASE

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Investment summit prompts Italian tunnelers to stay in New Zealand

Ghella, an Italian family-owned company working on Watercare's \$1.6 billion Central Interceptor project has recommitted to New Zealand following the Government's proposed pipeline of future infrastructure projects, outlined at the Infrastructure Investment Summit, Auckland.

Ghella, was one of 100 companies invited to the conference. As the Central Interceptor—New Zealand's largest wastewater infrastructure project nears completion, Ghella had been preparing to leave New Zealand due to a lack of ongoing work. However, the Investment Summit has reinforced Ghella's confidence in the Government's commitment to a stable future roll-out of infrastructure projects.

Francesco Saibene, Ghella's Country Manager, says: "It has been great to be part of the summit and to see firsthand how much work is happening behind the scenes. The Government's commitment to attracting investment should lead to more projects coming to market and we're keen to remain and get involved."

While many of these projects are still months or years away, Ghella hopes to build on the success of Watercare's Central Interceptor project which is on track for completion in 2026.

The Central Interceptor project was Ghella's first introduction to New Zealand. Saibene says the 130-year-old Italian tunnelling company is optimistic about securing more opportunities in the water infrastructure sector in the near future: "We are due to finish our 16.2kilometre wastewater tunnel under Auckland in coming weeks. Originally, we planned to return or reuse this Tunnel Boring





Machine (TBM), plus two other small machines on projects elsewhere around the world but following the positivity of the infrastructure summit, we will now keep the machine and associated services in New Zealand.”

The Central Interceptor project has been hailed as one of few mega infrastructure projects in New Zealand to be completed safely, on time and basically to budget. Saibene says: “We hope it serves as a strong reference for us in the future. Retaining our tunnel boring machines and equipment here is already a significant investment on our part,” Saibene added.

Watercare’s Chief Programme Delivery Officer, Shayne Cunis, welcomed the news that Ghella intends to stay in New Zealand: “We are delighted that, through Watercare, we have been able to bring such expertise to New Zealand—and now we can retain it, along with the hundreds of Kiwis and international workers who have been upskilled through this project. Having a TBM ready to go will help us and the industry deliver future projects more efficiently.”

Hiwa-i-te-Rangi Tunnel Boring Machine is due to break through into the Point Erin shaft, Herne Bay in mid-March after starting her journey in Māngere in 2021. The Central Interceptor project has employed more than 600 staff across 17 sites and the main tunnel is intersected by two link sewers, which capture combined water and wastewater flows from west Auckland suburbs.

The tunnel route was designed to avoid lava cones and involved a 1500m undersea stretch across the Manukau Harbour. The tunnel ranges in depth from 15m to 110m. The deepest sections occur under the Hillsborough Ridge.