

New trial helping to improve shingle roads

28 May 2019 - ADC - Hakatere Potts Road in the foothills of the Ashburton District connects travellers with the pristine sights of Lakes Camp and Clearwater, and it is also the site of an innovative experiment to deliver more durable road surfaces.

The Ashburton District Council has been investigating different solutions for particular shingle roads since June 2016 in an effort to improve their lifespan between maintenance work, which in turn, reduces costs.

The Council has discovered that adding basalt (a dark fine-grained volcanic rock) to the standard road metaling mixture provides a smoother road surface that is more resistant to potholes and corrugations - a much more comfortable experience for drivers.

The improved surface requires less maintenance and has seen annual road grading needs drop from 12 to four. The basalt also helps suppress dust brought up by passing vehicles.

This month, Fulton Hogan have begun applying the special mixture to 9.4km of Hakatere Potts Road, from the end of Ashburton Gorge Road all the way up to Lake Camp.

Standard road metal is most effective on shingle roads that are reasonably flat and straight - like most of the shingle roads commonly found around the Ashburton District, however this material does not perform as well on roads with a lot of curves and steeper gradients.

Steep, windy roads - like Hakatere Potts Road, require cars to work harder navigating them, and the force of the braking and accelerating creates potholes and corrugations.

Once completed, the improved road surface should provide a better drive for visitors and locals heading up to the popular lakes.

Fulton Hogan are expected to finish the project in the next fortnight.