

Connecting Ireland Insights

Issue 2 | Quarter 1 2023

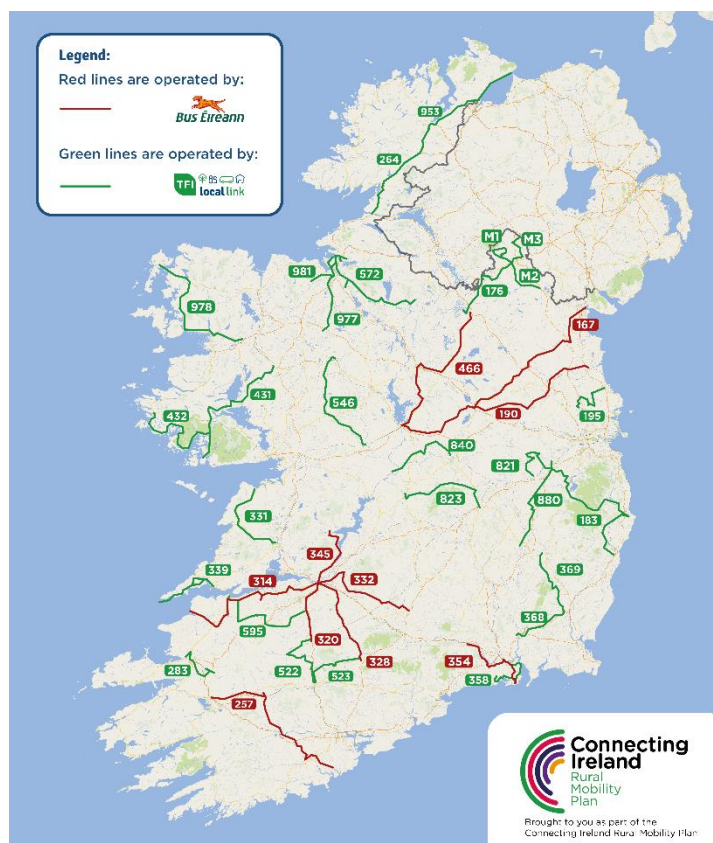


The Connecting Ireland rural mobility plan is an initiative by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to improve connectivity and mobility in rural areas through the development of new and enhanced public transport services.

Phase 1 of the plan has delivered 38 new and enhanced bus services throughout Ireland in 2022. These services have improved access to public transport and increased connection between villages, towns, and cities in rural Ireland.

Connecting Ireland has had a significant impact on rural communities by improving access to high frequency public transport bus services and connecting villages and towns to regional TFI bus and rail services.

The addition of these services has directly improved access to amenities such as tourist attractions, regional hubs, medical, economic, social and educational opportunities. The new and enhanced services launched in 2022 have greatly improved mobility in rural areas and increased access to essential services and resources for residents. For examples of this please see the case studies for the 821 Newbridge to Sallins and the 328 Limerick to Mitchelstown routes below.



Despite challenges in the transport sector such as increased fuel costs, lack of vehicles and trained drivers brought on by the recent pandemic and geo-political events the NTA is committed to improving connectivity and mobility in rural areas through the phased rollout of new and enhanced public transport services.

In 2023, the NTA is continuing to improve rural public transport services through the planning implementation of 67 new and enhanced bus services and development of non-conventional measures such as Smart DRT (Demand Responsive Transport and rural hackney pilot schemes.

Phase 2 of Connecting Ireland continues at pace and the list of implemented and proposed services for 2023 is included below.



Services Implemented in 2022

Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
176	Cavan - Monaghan	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	11/04/2022
195	Ashbourne - Balbriggan	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	23/05/2022
331	Ballyvaughan - Ennis	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	27/05/2022
840	Banagher - Tullamore	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	01/06/2022
978	Belmullet - Castlebar	TFI Local Link Mayo	13/06/2022
339	Kilrush - Loophead	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	01/09/2022
264	Ballyshannon - Letterkenny	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022
572	Ballinamore - Sligo	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022
953	Greencastle - Letterkenny	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022
977	Ballaghderreen - Sligo	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022
880	Carlow - Naas	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	19/09/2022
368	New Ross - Enniscorthy	TFI Local Link Wexford	24/09/2022
369	Enniscorthy – Bunclody – Tullow	TFI Local Link Wexford	24/09/2022
431	Claremorris – An Cheatrú Rua	TFI Local Link Galway	03/10/2022
595	Tarbert - Croom	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	03/10/2022
821	Newbridge - Naas via Allenwood	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	17/10/2022
823	Birr - Portlaoise	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	20/10/2022
167	Dundalk – Kells – Mullingar	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
190	Drogheda – Athlone	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
314	Limerick - Ballybunion via Foynes	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
320	Limerick – Charleville	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
328	Limerick - Mitchelstown	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
332	Limerick - Cashel	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
345	Scariff - Limerick	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
466	Athlone - Longford - Cavan	Bus Éireann	23/10/2022
354	Portlaw - Dunmore East	Bus Éireann	01/11/2022
358	Tramore - Dunmore East - Passage East - Waterford	TFI Local Link Waterford	01/11/2022
981	Coolaney - Sligo	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	07/11/2022
432	An Cheatrú Rua - Clifden	TFI Local Link Galway	16/11/2022
183	Sallins – Arklow	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	05/12/2022
523	Mitchelstown - Mallow	TFI Local Link Cork	05/12/2022
546	Castlerea – Ballinasloe via Moylough	TFI Local Link Galway	05/12/2022
M1	Monaghan Institute – Knocktallon	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022
M2	Monaghan Institute – Ballybay	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022
M3	Emyvale - Glaslough - Tyholland	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022
257	Macroom – Killarney via Mill Street	Bus Éireann	12/12/2022
283	Currans – Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	12/12/2022
522	Charleville – Mallow	TFI Local Link Cork	11/04/2022

Phase 1 Key Achievements

Since the implementation of Phase 1 in January 2022, the programme has delivered 38 new and enhanced bus services throughout the country. The introduction of these services has increased connectivity, particularly for people living outside major towns and cities. By designing all routes to connect with the wider TFI bus and rail network, local communities now have improved access to educational, employment and health care facilities - supporting a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future.



↑
254,543

people now have access to new and enhanced bus services



342,607 passenger journeys took place on the 38 new and enhanced bus services



53,275 passenger journeys took place on the 13 new services



patronage growth on the enhanced services



289,331 passenger journeys took place on the 25 enhanced services



more passengers were carried on the enhanced services in 2022 vs 2019



19 of the new and enhanced services provide connections with existing rail services



10 new connections to hospitals were created



Over 100,000 weekly kilometres were added to the Public Transport Network

Connected over

50

new towns and villages



9 new Higher Education connections to colleges were created



New Services in Action: Route 821 Newbridge to Sallins Train Station

As part of the Connecting Ireland programme, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin identified areas including Milltown, Allen, Kilmeague, Robertstown, Allenwood, Coill Dubh, Prosperous and Caragh for new bus services to improve connectivity and mobility for residents living in these settlements. These areas were identified as lacking regular public transport connections to county towns Naas and Newbridge with Caragh not being served by any regular public transport. It was noted that the implementation of new bus services in these areas would greatly improve access to essential services and resources for residents living in these areas.

Alan Kerry, Manager TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin, said “the new service has offered substantial alternatives to private car dependency for people residing along the route. The timetable has also offered connectivity to local train services along with peak time arrivals into Naas to accommodate employment and education needs. Weekend schedules have removed car dependency for people wishing to access their social activities. Route 821 now allows people to adopt public transport usage as part of their daily lives in rural Kildare”.

What passengers have said:

"This new 821 Service is great news for passengers along the route.

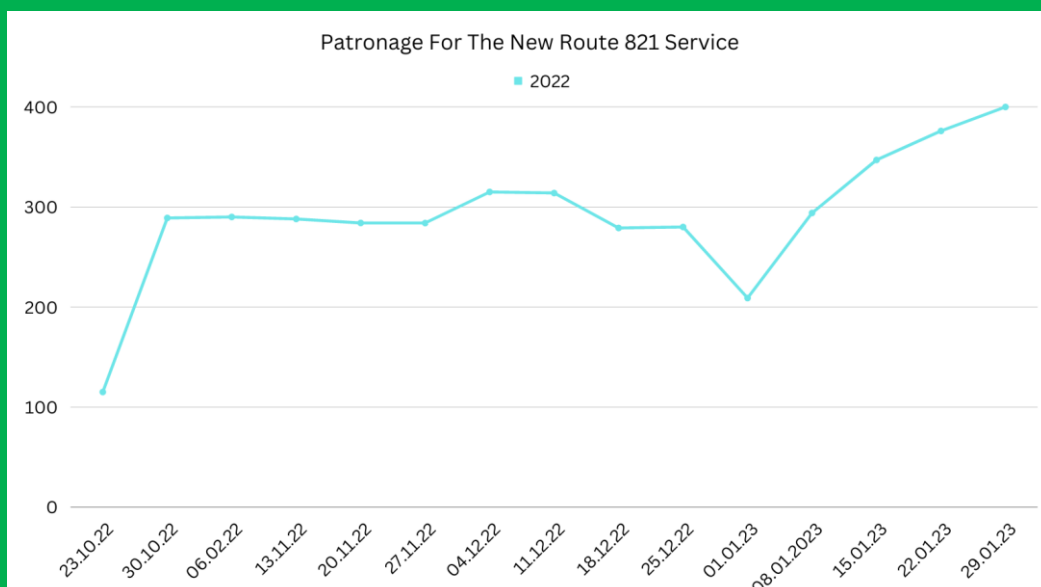
I am over the moon about this new service because not only does it provide a daily service, it also provides an evening and weekend service into Newbridge and Naas for shopping and social purposes and the link to Sallins Train Station allows me to connect with the train network.

On a daily basis, I was paying for taxis from Robertstown into Newbridge, which was crippling financially for me. The 821 service has now removed this cost and has been a great help to us.

This is a great service and very much needed."



Since the 17th of October, new Route 821 now provides greater connectivity and flexibility than ever before for the communities in Newbridge, Milltown, Allen, Kilmeague, Robertstown, Allenwood, Coill Dubh, Prosperous, Caragh, Naas and Sallins. The new service now connects communities in north Kildare to their county towns of Naas and Newbridge, as well as to regional bus services and Sallins Train Station. The new service now runs up to six return services Monday to Saturday and three return services on Sunday providing a new peak-time service for commuters to Naas and an early and late service to Sallins for commuters connecting to Dublin. In the first week, Route 821 carried almost 300 passengers and continues to carry an average of 300 per week since.





New Services in Action: Route 328 Limerick to Mitchelstown

As part of the Connecting Ireland programme, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Bus Éireann identified the need for the increased demand on Route 328. The service in its current form had a frequency of 2 return services per day Monday to Friday with one additional service to Limerick and 2 return services on Saturdays. The provision of the enhanced 328 service provides better connectivity across large parts of East Limerick and North Cork. The enhanced route now links Mitchelstown to Limerick six times per day seven days a week. Subsequently the service provides increased servicing to areas such as Galbally, Ballylanders, Knocklong in Hospital, Herbertstown, Caherline Cross and Caherconlish. Route 328 provides morning and evening peak services to facilitate residents in these areas to commute to employment facilities and to access essential services and resources.

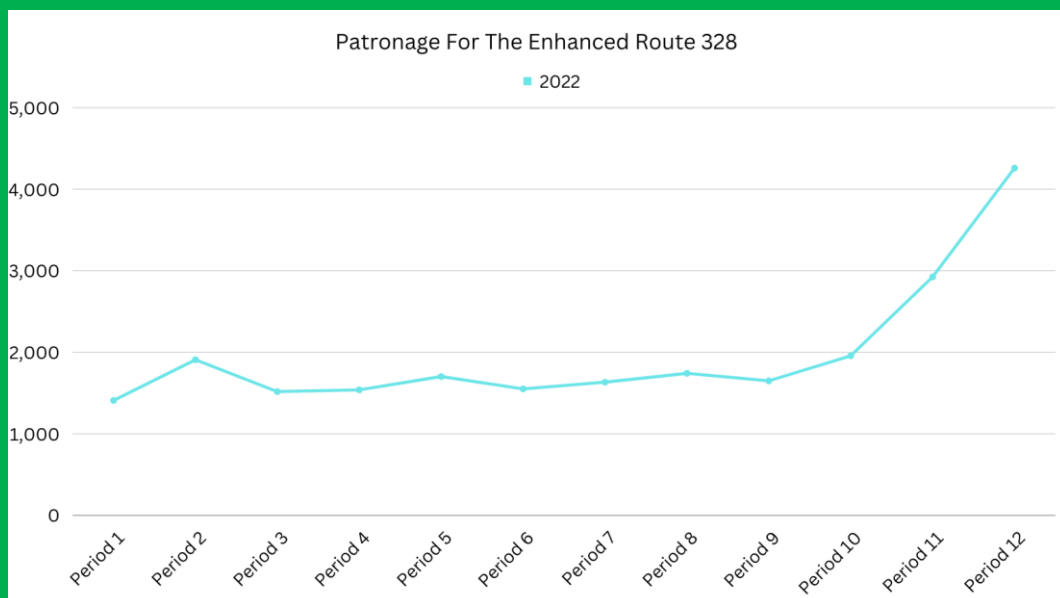
Since the services implementation in October 2022, Route 328 has seen an increase of over 132% in monthly customer trips with this trend continuing and growing in the early months of 2023. The service carried 23,798 passengers in 2022 and customer usage has grown across all age groups particularly amongst Young Adult (18-24 year olds) as the route provides access to 3rd Level education facilities.

What passengers have said:

"The enhanced Route 328 is great news for all passengers along the route.

As a student living in North Cork, I am now able to travel to college on a daily basis, and with the wide range of departures I can still fully enjoy college social activities.

The Young Adult fares are also excellent value and make travelling on the route such good value for students"



Services Implemented In 2023 YTD

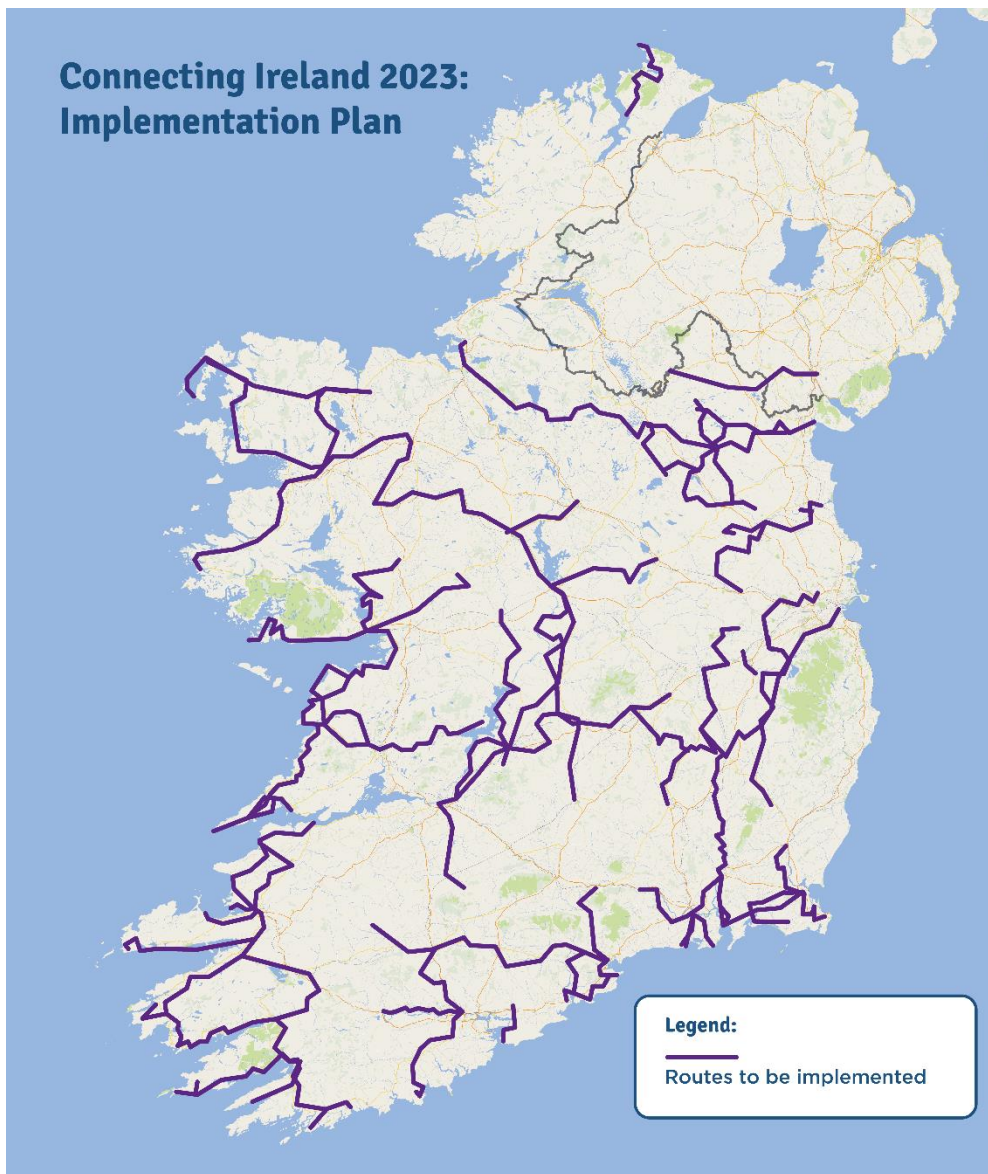
Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
897	Kilkenny – Castlecomer – Carlow – Athy	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	01/01/2023
188	Athboy - Drogheda via Navan & Duleek	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	16/01/2023
384	Wexford – Enniscorthy	TFI Local Link Wexford	13/02/2023

Upcoming Services to be implemented in 2023

Proposal ID	Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
30	170	Cavan - Dundalk	Bus Éireann	Q1
40	426	Longford - Roscommon	TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon	Q1
108	--	Bunclody – Dublin	Bus Éireann	Q1
132	--	Castlemaine - North Dingle	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q1
277	277	Dingle - Ballyferriter	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q1
279	--	Tralee - Killarney	Bus Éireann	Q1
329	329	Limerick - Kilfinane	Bus Éireann	Q1
360	--	Tramore - Waterford	Bus Éireann	Q1
387	387	Wexford Town - Rosslare Harbour via Rosslare Strand	TFI Local Link Wexford	Q1
854	--	Nenagh - Roscrea	TFI Local Link Tipperary	Q1
978	978	Belmullet - Castlebar	TFI Local Link Mayo	Q1
166A	171	Shercock - Dundalk	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q1
236A	232	Dursey Sound - Kilcrohane	TFI Local Link Cork	Q1
A59	356	Dungarvan - Clonmel	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q1
A62	887	Carlow - Newross	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	Q1
B53	438	Tuam - Headford - Corrundulla - Galway	TFI Local Link Galway	Q1
	270	Skibbereen - Killarney	Bus Éireann	Q2
129	--	Kilcullen - Newbridge	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Q2
139	139	Naas - Blanchardstown	Commercial Bus Operator	Q2
187	--	Cavan - Kells - Gibbstown	TBD	Q2
243	--	Newmarket - Cork	Bus Éireann	Q2
272	--	Tralee - Ballyunion	Bus Éireann	Q2
274	--	Tarbert - Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
322	--	Portumna - Nenagh	TFI Local Link Tipperary	Q2

Proposal ID	Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
354	354	Portlaoise - Dunmore East - Carrick-on-Suir	Bus Éireann	Q2
357	--	Youghal - Dungarvan via Villierstown	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q2
361	--	Youghal - Dungarvan via Ardmore	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q2
388	--	Wexford - Carrig an Barrow	TFI Local Link Wexford	Q2
423	--	Clifden - Westport	Bus Éireann	Q2
424	--	An Cheatru Rua - Galway	Bus Éireann	Q2
454	--	Ballina - Castlebar	TFI Local Link Mayo	Q2
547	--	Portumna - Ballinasloe	TFI Local Link Galway	Q2
834	834	Roscrea - Portlaoise	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q2
850	850	Roscrea - Athlone	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q2
884	885	Sallins - Baltinglass	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	Q2
888	--	Athy - Rathangan - Kildare	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Q2
108a	--	Bailieboro - Cootehill	Bus Éireann	Q2
108b	--	Cootehill - Shercock - Bailieboro - Virginia	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q2
115D	189	Enfield - Navan	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	Q2
240B	--	Trabolgan - Middleton	Bus Éireann	Q2
280N	280	Ring of Kerry northern half	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
280S	281	Ring of Kerry southern half	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
287A	--	Caherciveen - Knightstown	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
547A	--	Ennis - Whitegate	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Q2
A81	819	Mullingar - Athlone via Castletown Geoghegan	TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon	Q2
2A	270	Skibbereen - Killarney	Bus Éireann	Q2
9	--	Mallow - Fermoy - Lismore	TFI Local Link Cork	Q3
72	--	Athlone - Nenagh - Limerick	Bus Éireann	Q3
233	--	Macroom - Cork	Bus Éireann	Q3
323	--	Nenagh - Limerick	Bus Éireann	Q3
333	333	Kilkee - Ennis via Miltown Malbay	Bus Éireann	Q3
350	--	Ennis - Galway	Bus Éireann	Q3
370	--	Wexford - Waterford	Bus Éireann	Q3
440	--	Corridor review	Bus Éireann	Q3
572	--	Sligo - Cavan	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q3
822	--	Mountrath - Carlow	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q3
954	--	Moville - Malin Head Tower	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q3
955	--	Carndonagh - Buncrana	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q3
425A	--	Galway - Mountbellew	Bus Éireann	Q3
A74	--	New route Clones - Newry	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q3
B1	331	Ballyvaughan - Ennis	Bus Éireann	Q3
239	--	Cork - Bandon	Bus Éireann	Q4
339	--	Kilrush - Loophead	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Q4
446	446	Belmullet - Ballina	Bus Éireann	Q4
237B	--	Baltimore - Union Hall	Bus Éireann	Q4

Connecting Ireland 2023: Implementation Plan



The estimated implementation dates are indicative and may change for a number of reasons:

- The duration of the planning and design process, involving liaison with Local Authorities, TFI Local Link Offices, representatives, lobby groups, passengers and transport service providers to provide enhanced levels of service in response to growth and changes in demand for transport;
- Availability of service providers and drivers in particular following the impacts of Covid19 and macro-economic factors brought about by the conflict in Ukraine on the industry.

Given the rapidly changing environment, it is important that the Connecting Ireland team is able to be agile and flexible in its management of the programme, so that where progress is impacted, other plans can be advanced instead. This Bulletin reflects the Authority's intention as of today, but is likely to change to respond to changing circumstances.