

Connecting Ireland Insights

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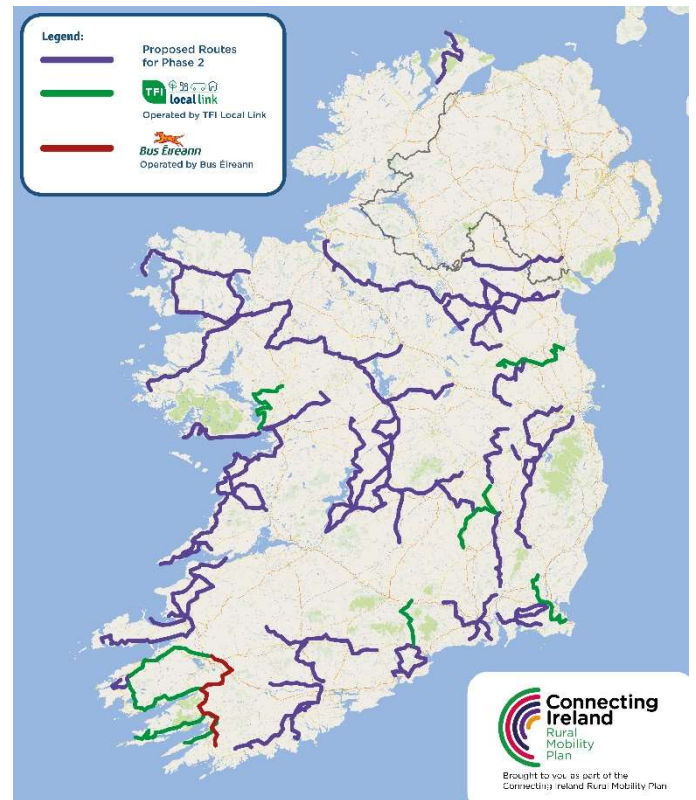


▶ The roll out of Connecting Ireland services due to accelerate in the coming months

The Connecting Ireland (CI) Rural Mobility Plan is the National Transport Authority's (NTA) plan to improve rural and interurban public transport services across the country over five years 2022 – 2026 inclusive. The Government fully supports the Plan and is allocating funding on an annual basis to achieve it.

The improved public transport services introduced in Phase 1 (2022) of the CI Plan generated a positive customer response and passenger numbers have continued to grow throughout the first half of 2023. More people are trying out and committing to using public transport; the 38 new and enhanced services launched last year have grown by 40% between January and June of this year. Of the seven new and enhanced services launched so far in Phase 2 an average 9% growth in patronage per week has been recorded.

This growth in bus use is due to the revised services opening up new employment, healthcare, retail and educational opportunities for rural residents in the areas served. The new and enhanced services have also boosted local tourism and leisure activity and created new business opportunities.



In addition to these economic benefits, the CI enhancements have improved social cohesion by connecting communities, allowing people to access social events, activities, and support services more easily. The transfer by some to public transport is likely to have contributed to a reduction in carbon emissions, by foregoing the use of the car for their travel. This latter outcome is particularly important, given today's focus on mitigating the transport sector's impact on our environment and Ireland's obligations to do so under EU law.

During the remainder of 2023, the programme will accelerate to introduce more than 60 new or enhanced bus services across Ireland. We will do our utmost to deliver these, being mindful of the continuing shortage in staff across the industry following the continuing challenge in recruiting drivers. We remain confident however that the majority of these projects will be in passenger carrying service by the end of the year.



➤ New Services in Action – Route 384 Wexford Town to Enniscorthy

As part of the Connecting Ireland Plan, the NTA and TFI Local Link Wexford identified areas including Glynn, Killurin, Ballyhogue, Bree, Wilton and Tomnalossett for new bus services to improve connectivity and mobility for these communities. These areas were identified as lacking regular public transport connections to county towns Wexford Town and Enniscorthy. 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.

Since the 13th of February, new Route 384 now provides greater connectivity and flexibility for the communities of Glynn, Killurin, Ballyhogue, Bree, Wilton and Tomnalossett. The new route operates five daily return services Monday to Saturday and four return services on Sundays. The new service provides improved connectivity to regional bus and rail services to facilitate onward travel to South Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Wicklow and Dublin. The new service also provides improved access to medical services in St John’s Community Hospital, local libraries, local town bus services and tourist attractions such as the Irish National Heritage Park, Enniscorthy Castle, the historic Athenauem and the National 1798 Rebellion Centre. In the first week, Route 384 carried over 410 passengers and continues to carry an average of 430 passengers per week since.

Speaking on the success of the 384 service to date, **TFI Local Link Wexford Manager MaryB O’Leary** said “We are delighted with the success of Route 384 Enniscorthy to Wexford. The uptake from the villages served by the route has been terrific, it shows the eagerness of people in rural communities to use public transport.”

What passengers have said:

"Myself and my friends regularly use the 384 service from Ballyhogue to Wexford town. It allows us to meet up to socialise in town as well as get to work during the summer holidays.

Living in the countryside can be difficult for a young person who doesn't drive but this bus service means we can get to where we need to and it doesn't cost a lot either.

It would be great if the service ran later in the evenings too."

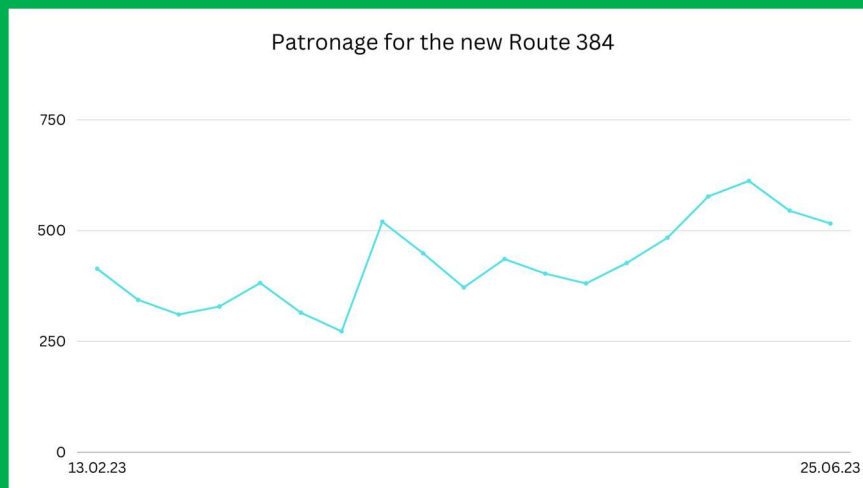


What passengers have said:

"As a mother of teenagers, I find the new Local Link Wexford 384 is a fantastic service.

Before it came along, I could be driving in and out to Wexford 2 or 3 times a day.

The frequency of the service means I don't need to anymore. In addition, the service is reliable and very affordable."





New Services in Action – Embracing Sustainability with Fully Electric Vehicles

As the world progresses towards a greener and more sustainable future, transportation plays a crucial role in reducing carbon footprint. The NTA is continually supporting initiatives in the area of climate action including the ongoing transition of the public transport fleet to zero emissions. In response to the EU’s Clean Vehicles Directive and the Government’s Climate Action Plan, the Authority aims to increase the numbers of clean electric vehicles on TFI Local Link services. The Authority has made provisions in the tendering process for TFI Local Link services for Operators to propose electric vehicles in their tenders. One example of this is the introduction of an Electric Vehicle (EV) on the new TFI Local Link Galway Route 438. This is the first route under the Connecting Ireland Plan to feature an EV. Route 438 aims to reduce its carbon footprint and provide a cleaner and greener mode of transportation for passengers.

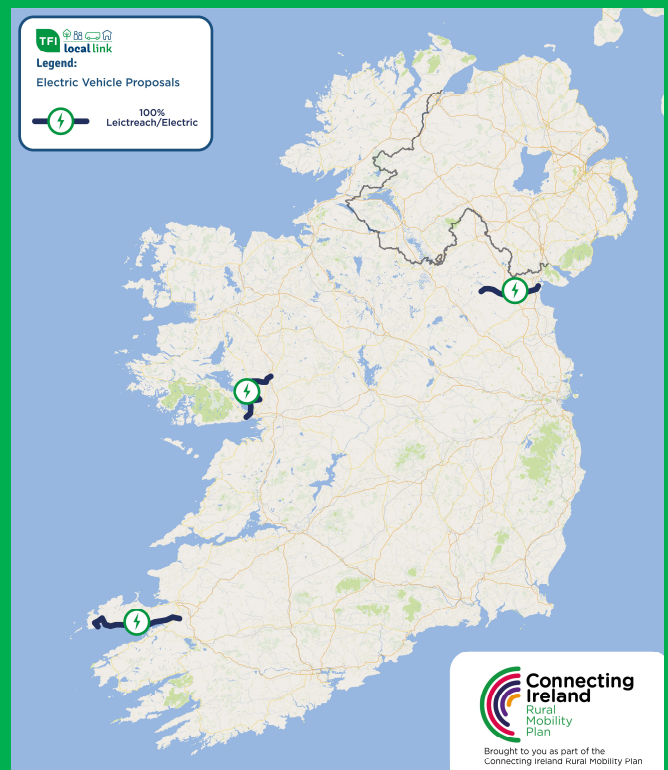
Route 438 operates 3 return services, 7 days a week. The route from Galway to Tuam offers enhanced connectivity to villages and areas such as Belclare, Caherlistrance, Headford, Auclogheen, Cor an Dola, Eanach Dhúin, Cluain Bú, Baile an Dúliagh and Mionlach. The route also provides a new connection between Tuam and Headford and Cor a Dola into Galway City. The route also offers a peak-time for commuters and improved connectivity to University Hospital Galway, the University of Galway and Galway Cathedral.



The transition to EVs not only benefits the environment but also enhances the travel experience for passengers. The EV on Route 438 is equipped with modern amenities, such as on-board Wi-Fi and charging points for electronic devices ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable trip.

Speaking on the electrification of Route 438 **TFI Local Link Galway Manager Joe Greally** “As we continue to prioritise sustainability in all aspects of our lives, Route 438 serves as a shining example of how transportation can be efficient and environmentally friendly. By choosing to travel on this fully electric bus route, passengers can not only reach their destinations comfortably but also make a positive impact on the planet. Together, let us embark on this journey towards a greener future, on electric bus ride at a time”.

The NTA and the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan is continuing to embrace clean energy solutions as numerous bus routes that are proposed to be implemented throughout Phase 2 of the Plan will feature 1 or more Electric Vehicles.



► New Services in Action – Tourism Routes

The NTA as part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility has introduced numerous routes that allow travellers to take in the amazing scenic views in rural Ireland. A variety of regular rural services operated by both TFI Local Link and Bus Éireann have brought connectivity to rural areas but also allow tourists and locals to visit some of the most beautiful spots in rural Ireland along coastal and in-land routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Sheep’s Head Peninsula and the Iveragh Peninsula . Throughout Phase 2 of the Plan, two routes that feature these scenic views are Route 270 which takes passengers from Killarney to Skibbereen and route 232 which takes passengers from Allihies to Kilcrohane.

In its enhanced form, Bus Éireann Route 270 provides five daily services connecting Killarney and Skibbereen all year round. The updated service features an enhanced weekly timetable with earlier departures from Kenmare to Killarney and offers enhanced connectivity to the villages and areas of Killarney, Glenfesk, Loo Bridge, Morleys Bridge, Kilgarvan, Kenmare, Glengarriff, Snave Bridge, Eagle Point, Ballylickey, Bantry, Durras Cross, Ballydehob Bridge, Aghadown, Church Cross and Skibereen. Route 270 also offers passengers from West Cork a connection with MTU Tralee and services to Killarney as well as morning and evening peak services to facilitate residents in these areas as well as tourists.

Since the launch of the Route 270 on June 25th 2023, Josephine O’Driscoll, Wild Atlantic Way Manager, Fáilte Ireland speaks on the impact this new route would have on tourism. *“Improving connectivity and car-free travel routes between the two regions is key to encouraging new demographics of visitors as well as locals to explore the very best that Ireland has to offer.”*



TFI Local Link Route 232, takes passengers along the Sheep’s Head Way Peninsula with the route beginning in Allihies and finishing in Kilcrohane. Operating four daily return services seven days a week, connectivity has been enhanced in areas such as Durrus, Bantry, Glengarriff, Adrigole, Ahakista, Ballylickey, Castletownbere and Dursey Sound. The new service also offers a peak-time service for commuters as well as improved connectivity to regional bus services, tourists and locals can experience the offerings of beautiful areas such as Bantry, Dursey Island and Castletownbere with connections to Bere Island Ferry and the Dursey Island Cable Car.

Speaking on the impact it would have on residents and tourists TFI Local Link Cork Manager David O’Brien stated *“It will mean a significant improvement in the quality of life for people living in these areas. People can now access a wide range of public and social services, training courses, colleges, hospital appointments, banks and lots of other services and amenities along with onward train and bus connections”.*



Services implemented so far in 2023

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
438	Galway – Tuam	TFI Local Link Galway	22/05/2023
356	Dungarvan – Clonmel	TFI Local Link Waterford	12/06/2023
232	Allihies – Kilcrohane	TFI Local Link Cork	12/06/2023
270	Skibbereen – Bantry – Kenmare - Killarney	Bus Éireann	25/06/2023

Services announced for implementation in 2023

Proposal ID	Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
166A	171	Shercock – Carrickmacross – Inniskeen – Dundalk	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q3
280N	280	Waterville – Caherciveen – Killorglin – Killarney	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
280S	281	Waterville – Sneem – Kenmare	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
287A	287	Caherciveen – Portmagee – Chapelstown – Knightstown	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
387	387	Wexford Town – Rosslare Harbour via Rosslare Strand	TFI Local Link Wexford	Q3
850	850	Roscrea – Templemore – Birr – Banagher – Cloghan – Athlone	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q3
A81	819	Mullingar – Castletowngeoghan – Athlone	TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon	Q3
30	170	Cavan – Bailieborough – Kingscourt – Carrickmacross – Dundalk	Bus Éireann	Q3
243	243	Newmarket – Kanturk – Mallow – Cork	Bus Éireann	Q3
272	272	Tralee – Listowel – Ballybunion	Bus Éireann	Q3
279	279	Tralee – Castlemaine – Milltown – Killorglin – Killarney	Bus Éireann	Q3
360	360	Tramore – Waterford	Bus Éireann	Q3
40	426	Longford – Knockanboy – Killashee – Ballyleague – Roscommon	TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon	Q3
274	274	Tarbert – Ballybunion – Ballyheigue – Ardfer – Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
A62	887	Carlow – Bagenalstown – Graiguenamanagh – New Ross	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	Q3
388	388	Wexford – Barntown – Foulksmills – Wellingtonbridge – Duncormick – Bridgetown	TFI Local Link Wexford	Q3

Proposal ID	Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
834	834	Roscrea – Mountrath – Portlaoise	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q3
547A	344	Ennis – Clooney – Tulla – Feakle – Scarriff – Mountshannon – Whitegate	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Q3
424	424	Leitir Mealláin – An Ceathrú Rua – Costelloe – An Spidéal – Bearna – Galway	Bus Éireann	Q3
547	547	Portumna – Ballycrossaun – Eyrecourt – Ballinure – Ballinasloe	TFI Local Link Galway	Q3
952	952	Derry – Carndonagh – Malin Head	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q3
953	953	Letterkenny – Letterkenny IT – Bridge End – Muff – Greencastle	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q3
329	329	Limerick – Ballyneety – Bruff – Kilmallock – Kilfinane	Bus Éireann	Q3
322	322	Portumna – Terryglass – Ballinderry – Drominer – Ballycommon – Nenagh	TFI Local Link Tipperary	Q3
357	357	Youghal – Clashmore – Agllish – Villerstown – Whitechurch – Dungarvan	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q3
361	361	Youghal – Ardmore – Dungarvan	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q3
454	454	Ballina – Crossmolina – Lahardane – Pontoon – Turlough – Castlebar	TFI Local Link Mayo	Q3
822	822	Mountrath – Abbeyleix – Carlow	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Q3
978	978	Belmullet – Castlebar	TFI Local Link Mayo	Q3
273	273	Brandon – Castlegregory – Aughacasla – Blennerville – Tralee – Fenit	TFI Local Link Mayo	Q3
854	854	Nenagh – Roscrea	TFI Local Link Tipperary	Q3
132	132	Bunclody – Tullow – Baltinglass – Blessington – Dublin	Bus Éireann	Q3
187	187	Kells – Oldcastle – Ballyjamesduff – Virginia	Bus Éireann	Q3
233	---	Macroom – Coachford – Dripsey – Cork	Bus Éireann	Q3
333	333	Kilkee – Miltown Malbay – Ennistymon – Ennis	Bus Éireann	Q3
350	350	Ennis – Ennistymon – Lisdoonvarna – Galway	Bus Éireann	Q3
354	354	Carrick-on-Suir – Portlaw – Waterford – Dunmore East	Bus Éireann	Q3
370	370	Wexford – Wellingtonbridge – Ramsgrange – Campile – New Ross – Waterford	Bus Éireann	Q3
423	423	Clifden – Letterfrack – Leenaun – Westport	Bus Éireann	Q3
440	---	Westport – Castlebar – Swinford – Claremorris – Ballyhaunis – Roscommon – Athlone	Bus Éireann	Q3
425A	---	Galway – Monivea – Caltra – Mountbellew	Bus Éireann	Q3
276	276	Castlemaine – Annascaul – Daingean Uí Chúis	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
277	277	Daingean Uí Chúis – Ceann Trá – Baile an Fheirtéaraigh – Dhún Chaoin	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q3
884	885	Sallins – Naas – Blessington – Ballymore Eustace – Baltinglass	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	Q3
108b/B53	178	Cootehill – Shercock – Bailieboro – Virginia	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q3

Proposal ID	Route Number	Route Name	Operator	Implementation Date
72	---	Athlone – Cloghan – Nenagh – Limerick	Bus Éireann	Q4
239	---	Cork – Bandon – Butlerstown	Bus Éireann	Q4
323	---	Nenagh – Castleconnell – Limerick	Bus Éireann	Q4
446	446	An Fód Dubh – Bangor Erris – Crossmolina – Ballina	Bus Éireann	Q4
108a	108	Kells – Bailieboro – Cootehill	Bus Éireann	Q4
237B	---	Baltimore – Skibbereen – Union Hall – Glandore	Bus Éireann	Q4
139	139	Naas – Sallins – Clane – Maynooth – Leixlip – Blanchardstown	NTA Contract	Q4
9	---	Mallow – Fermoy – Lismore – Dungarvan	TFI Local Link Cork	Q4
339	---	Kilrush – Loophead – Kilkee – Kilrush	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Q4
888	888	Athy – Rathangan – Kildare	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Q4
A74	---	Clones – Ballybay – Castleblaney – Newry	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Q4
129	129	Kilcullen – Athgarvan – Newbridge	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Q4
572	572	Ballinamore – Riverstown – Sligo	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Q4
115D	189	Enfield – Longwood – Ballivor – Kildalkey – Trim – Dunderry – Robinstown – Navan	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	---
B1	331	Ballyvaughan – Lisdoonvarna – Ennistymon – Ennis	Bus Éireann	---

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 NTA's intention as of today, but is likely to change to respond to changing circumstances.