

Connecting Ireland Insights

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Over 150 new/ enhanced bus services introduced to rural Ireland through the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan saw many milestones in 2024, one of which was introducing nearly 150 new/enhanced routes since the introduction of the plan in October 2021. In 2024, 45 new/enhanced bus services were introduced which helped to achieve this. However, to date over 150 routes have been rolled out.

Patronage figures in 2024 continued to show year-on-year growth with 28% patronage growth on enhanced Connecting Ireland services in comparison to 2023 figures. 2024 saw the highest passenger journey figures of the Plan so far with over 1.1 million passenger journeys taking place on the 45 new or enhanced services introduced in 2024. 989,464 of these passenger journeys took place on the 28 enhanced services from the date they were enhanced, and 178,781 passenger journeys came from the 17 new routes.



In 2024, the services launched provided a further 54 connections to new towns and villages in rural Ireland, 19 hospital connections, 7 college connections and provided 22 rail service connections meaning it is easier than ever to access education and healthcare opportunities and connect to the wider TFI Public Transport Network.

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan aims to increase access for people living in rural Ireland and in 2024 the Plan gave 192,100 more people access to new and enhanced bus services whilst adding 97,000 weekly kilometres to the TFI Public Transport Network meaning people have more opportunities to connect to educational, employment and healthcare facilities.

In 2025, the 4th year of the Plan, Connecting Ireland will continue to introduce more services to provide more people living outside of Ireland's major towns and cities a more connected, affordable and sustainable way to travel.



Phase 3 Key Achievements

Since the implementation of Phase 3 in January 2024, Connecting Ireland has delivered 45 new or enhanced bus services across Ireland. The introduction of these services has provided increased connectivity to educational, employment and healthcare facilities. These improvements to the TFI Network provide people living outside of major towns and cities a more connected, affordable and sustainable way to travel.



more people now have access to new and enhanced bus services



passenger journeys took place on the 45 new and enhanced bus services in 2024



patronage growth on enhanced services in 2024 vs 2023



passenger journeys took place on the new services



passenger journeys took place on the 28 enhanced services (from the date they were enhanced)



new towns and villages



of the new and enhanced services provide connections with rail services



19 new connections to hospitals were created



weekly kilometres have been added to the TFI Public Transport Network



7 new higher education connections to colleges were created



Enhanced Services in Action – Route 897 Kilkenny to Athy

As part of the Connecting Ireland Plan, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow identified a requirement for an enhancement of the existing bus service between Kilkenny and Athy to improve connectivity and mobility for the communities of Kilkenny City, Dunmore, Moneenroe, Henebry's Cross, Jenkinstown, Ballyragget and Ballylinan. The implementation of an enhanced bus service in these areas would greatly improve access to essential services and resources for residents living in these areas.

A new evening service was introduced from Thursday to Saturday between Kilkenny City and Moneenroe meaning that the enhanced route, introduced in December 2024, now operates four daily return services Monday to Wednesday, five daily return services Thursday to Saturday and three daily return services on Sunday.

The route continues to provide peak-time services, improving connectivity to regional bus and rail services. It also provides greater connectivity to villages and areas of Dunmore, Henebry's Cross, Jenkinstown, Ballyragget, Brynesgrove, Cadtlecomer, Moneenroe, Crettyard, Newtown Cross, Killeslin, Carlow, Ballickmoyler, Arles, Pedigree Corner and Ballylinan. In its first week, the enhanced service carried over 900 passengers and continues to carry over 930 passengers each week.

Speaking on the success of the service, **TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow General Manager Jackie Meally** said *"The 897 Service Kilkenny to Athy was initiated as part of the connecting Ireland plan in October 2023. This service has continued to grow with up to 70,000 Passenger trips recorded to date this has provided the people of north Kilkenny access to Kilkenny city Carlow and Athy linking with other modes of transport to further their journeys to onward destinations."*

In early December 2024 Route 897 was extended to incorporate the night time economy in Kilkenny city and to give further options connecting North Kilkenny to Kilkenny city for those who wanted an evening out or for people finishing work late, and this again has provided valuable transport needs and further enhanced the 897 service.

We at TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow are proud to have this flagship service as part of the TFI Local Link Network of services we provide, may it continue to grow and continue to be a success for many years to



New or Enhanced Services implemented in 2025 so far

Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
WW10	Carnew – Baltinglass	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	06/01/2025
891	Kilkenny – Fiddown	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	20/01/2025
834	Portlaoise – Roscrea	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	10/02/2025
384	Enniscorthy – Wexford	TFI Local Link Wexford	27/03/2025
263	Castletownbere – Allihies – Dursey	TFI Local Link Cork	31/03/2025
854	Roscrea – Nenagh	TFI Local Link Tipperary	31/03/2025

New or Enhanced Services to be implemented in Q2 2025

Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
243	Newmarket – Cork	Bus Éireann	Q2
163	Brú na Bóinne – Drogheda	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	Q2
280	Waterville – Killorglin	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
363	Fermoy – Dungarvan	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q2
132	Dublin – Buncloody	Bus Éireann	Q2
370	Wexford – Waterford	Bus Éireann	Q2
425A	Galway – Mountbellew	Bus Éireann	Q2
287	Valentia – Cahirsiveen	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q2
318	Ennis – Limerick	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Q2
369	Enniscorthy – Kildavin	TFI Local Link Wexford	Q2
888	Athy – Allenwood	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Q2
237	Skibbereen – Cork	Bus Éireann	Q2
338	Ennistymon – Corofin – Ennis	Bus Éireann	Q2
356	Dungarvan – Clonmel	TFI Local Link Waterford	Q2