

# Determination of a Public Service Obligation following amendments to services between Kilkenny - Naas

Determination of Public Service  
Obligation as a result of the license  
amendment to Route 717 Dublin  
Airport – Clonmel.



# 1. Introduction

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 J.J. Kavanagh & Sons applied to the National Transport Authority (the NTA) for amendments to a regular licensed service on their Route 717 Dublin Airport - Clonmel.

The license amendment for Route 717 relates to the removal of stops, specifically at Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown Cross, Ballylynan, Athy, Kilcullen, and Naas, and the adjustment of timings for two services.

This results in the removal of three daily services from Clonmel to Dublin via Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown Cross, Ballylynan, Athy, Kilcullen, and Naas and two in the opposite direction. These services operated Monday to Sunday.

Additionally, the stop in Kilkenny was moved from Castlecomer Road to MacDonagh Station. This change has limited impacts, and it is not assessed in this Determination Report.

These amendments were granted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2024.

This Determination Report assesses whether there is a Public Service Obligation (PSO) resulting from these changes, or whether the existing transport options in the area are sufficient to cater for local demand, taking into account socio-economic considerations.

## 1.1 Route Map

Figure 1 below shows Route 717 with the withdrawn Route variant via Castlecomer shown in blue.

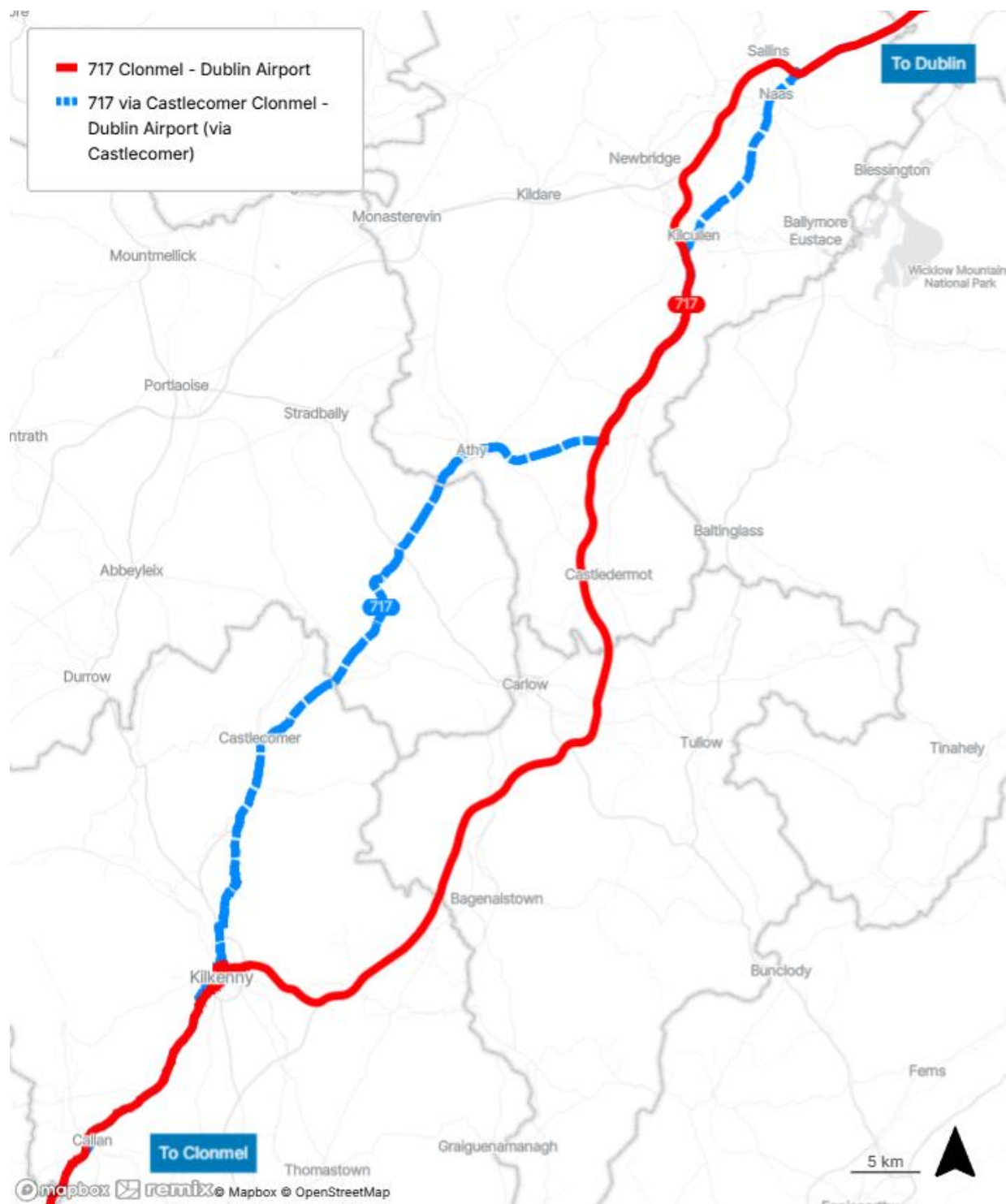


Figure 1 – Route 717 Alignment

## 1.2 Timetable Analysis

Route 717 provides a connection between Clonmel, Dublin City and Dublin Airport with an end-to-end journey time of approximately 3 hours and 25 minutes. The journey time for the impacted settlements ranges from 2 hours 20 minutes for Castlecomer to Dublin, and 1 hour 35 minutes for Kilcullen to Dublin.

Prior to the license amendment, there were three daily services between Clonmel, Dublin City and Dublin Airport. These services operated Monday through Sunday, with stops at Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown Cross, Ballylynan, Athy, Kilcullen, and Naas, while in the opposite direction, there were two daily services, also running Monday through Sunday, stopping at the same locations.

The proposed changes to the Route 717 timetable are shown in Table 1. The stops and stopping times which have been removed or changed as a result of this amendment are marked in red.

Table 1 – Amended 717 Timetable with Amendments Shown in Red

Clonmel - Dublin Airport		Monday - Sunday									
Stop Location	Stop Name										
Clonmel	Davis Road, Army Barracks	1:30	3:00	5:00	6:30	8:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	18:00
Kilsheelan	Ormonde Stores	1:40	3:10	5:10	6:40	8:10	10:10	12:10	14:10	16:10	18:10
Grangemockler	Opposite Saint Marys Catholic Church	1:50	3:20	5:20	6:50	8:20	10:20	12:20	14:20	16:20	18:20
Killamery	Opposite The Auld House	1:55	3:25	5:25	6:55	8:25	10:25	12:25	14:25	16:25	18:25
Callan	Green Street, Opposite Supervalu	2:00	3:30	5:30	7:00	8:35	10:35	12:35	14:35	16:35	18:35
Kilkenny	Ormonde Road, Ormonde College	2:15	3:45	5:45	7:20	8:55	10:55	12:55	14:55	16:55	18:50
Kilkenny	Castlecomer Road, Glendine Inn	2:25	3:55	5:55	7:30	9:05	11:05	13:05	15:05	17:05	19:05
Castlecomer	Kilkenny Street, Bookmakers	2:30	---	6:05	---	---	---	---	---	---	19:23
Crettyard	Northbound Bus Stop	2:35	---	6:10	---	---	---	---	---	---	19:28
Newtown Cross	O'Sullivan's Fuels	2:38	---	6:13	---	---	---	---	---	---	19:30
Ballylynan	Murphys Pub	2:45	---	6:15	---	---	---	---	---	---	19:35
Athy	Leinster Steet, Castle Inn	2:55	---	6:25	---	---	---	---	---	---	19:45
Kilcullen	Opposite Hideout	3:15	---	6:50	---	---	---	---	---	---	20:05
Naas	Main Street South, Post Office	3:24	---	6:59	---	---	---	---	---	---	20:14
Naas	Main Street North, Poplar Pharmacy	3:25	---	7:00	---	---	---	---	---	---	20:15
Dublin	Red Cow Luas Stop	---	5:50	7:20	8:50	10:20	12:20	14:20	16:20	18:20	20:35
Dublin City	Parkgate Street	---	6:05	7:40	9:10	10:40	12:40	14:40	16:40	18:40	20:55
Dublin City	Eden Quay	---	6:10	7:45	9:15	10:45	12:45	14:45	16:45	18:45	21:00
Dublin Airport	Zone 16, Stop 13	4:15	6:30	8:25	9:40	11:10	13:10	15:10	17:10	19:10	21:25

Dublin Airport - Clonmel		Monday - Sunday									
Stop Location	Stop Name										
Dublin Airport	Zone 16, Stop 13	5:45	8:00	10:00	12:00	14:00	16:00	17:00	19:00	21:00	23:00
Dublin City	Georges Quay	6:15	8:30	10:30	12:30	14:30	16:30	17:30	19:30	21:30	23:30
Dublin City	Opposite Heuston Station	6:20	8:35	10:35	12:35	14:35	16:35	17:40	19:35	21:35	23:35
Dublin	Red Cow Luas Stop	6:30	8:50	10:50	12:50	14:50	16:50	18:00	19:50	21:50	23:50
Naas	Main Street North, Opposite Poplar Pharmacy	6:50	---	---	---	---	---	18:25	---	---	---
Naas	Main Street South, Opposite Post Office	6:51	---	---	---	---	---	18:26	---	---	---
Kilcullen	The Hideout	7:00	---	---	---	---	---	18:35	---	---	---
Athy	Leinster Street, Opposite Castle Inn	7:25	---	---	---	---	---	19:00	---	---	---
Ballylynan	Saint Annes Hall	7:30	---	---	---	---	---	19:05	---	---	---
Newtown Cross	O'Sullivan's Fuels	7:35	---	---	---	---	---	19:10	---	---	---
Crettyard	Southbound Bus Stop	7:45	---	---	---	---	---	19:20	---	---	---
Castlecomer	Kilkenny Street, Holohans Shop	7:50	---	---	---	---	---	19:25	---	---	---
Kilkenny	Castlecomer Road, Newpark Hotel	8:10	10:15	12:15	14:15	16:15	18:15	19:45	21:15	23:10	1:05
Kilkenny	Ormonde Road, Opposite Ormonde College	8:15	10:20	12:25	14:25	16:25	18:25	19:50	21:20	23:20	1:10
Callan	Main Bus Stop	8:30	10:35	12:40	14:40	16:40	18:40	20:05	21:35	23:35	1:25
Killamery	The Auld House	8:35	10:40	12:45	14:45	16:40	18:40	20:10	21:40	23:40	1:35
Grangemockler	Saint Marys Catholic Church	8:40	10:45	12:50	14:50	16:45	18:45	20:15	21:45	23:45	1:40
Kilsheelan	Opposite Ormonde Stores	8:50	10:55	13:00	15:00	16:55	18:55	20:25	21:55	23:55	1:50
Clonmel	Davis Road, Showgrounds	9:00	11:00	13:05	15:05	17:00	19:00	20:30	22:00	0:00	1:55

Stop/Times Removed

The impact of this amendment is the following:

- Route 717 will no longer provide service to Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown Cross, Ballylynan, Athy, Kilcullen, and Naas, causing a reduction in direct service and an increase in journey time for passengers along this alignment.

## 2. Settlement Analysis

### 2.1 Demand Analysis

The table below highlights the daily number of people travelling between the locations on Route 717 for all modes of transport.

*Table 2 - 2022 Demand (all modes, work and school)*

	Clonmel	Castlecomer	Newtown	Ballylinan	Athy	Kilcullen	Naas	Dublin city and suburbs	Total
Clonmel							2	151	153
Castlecomer			2		7		2	31	42
Newtown	2	14		2	2			14	34
Ballylinan		2	2		141		20	68	233
Athy	2	2		33		37	203	697	974
Kilcullen					9		184	434	627
Naas	2			2	36	76		4,254	4,370
Dublin city and suburbs	17	6			44	81	830		978
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>1,241</b>	<b>5,649</b>	<b>7,411</b>

### 2.2 Castlecomer

As a result of the Route 717 license amendment, Castlecomer is no longer served by the Route 717 services shown in Table 3.

*Table 3 – Castlecomer withdrawn Route 717 services*

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Castlecomer Stopping Times		
				Monday to Sunday		
717	JJ Kavanagh	Clonmel	Dublin	02:30	06:05	19:23
		Dublin	Clonmel	07:50	18:25	

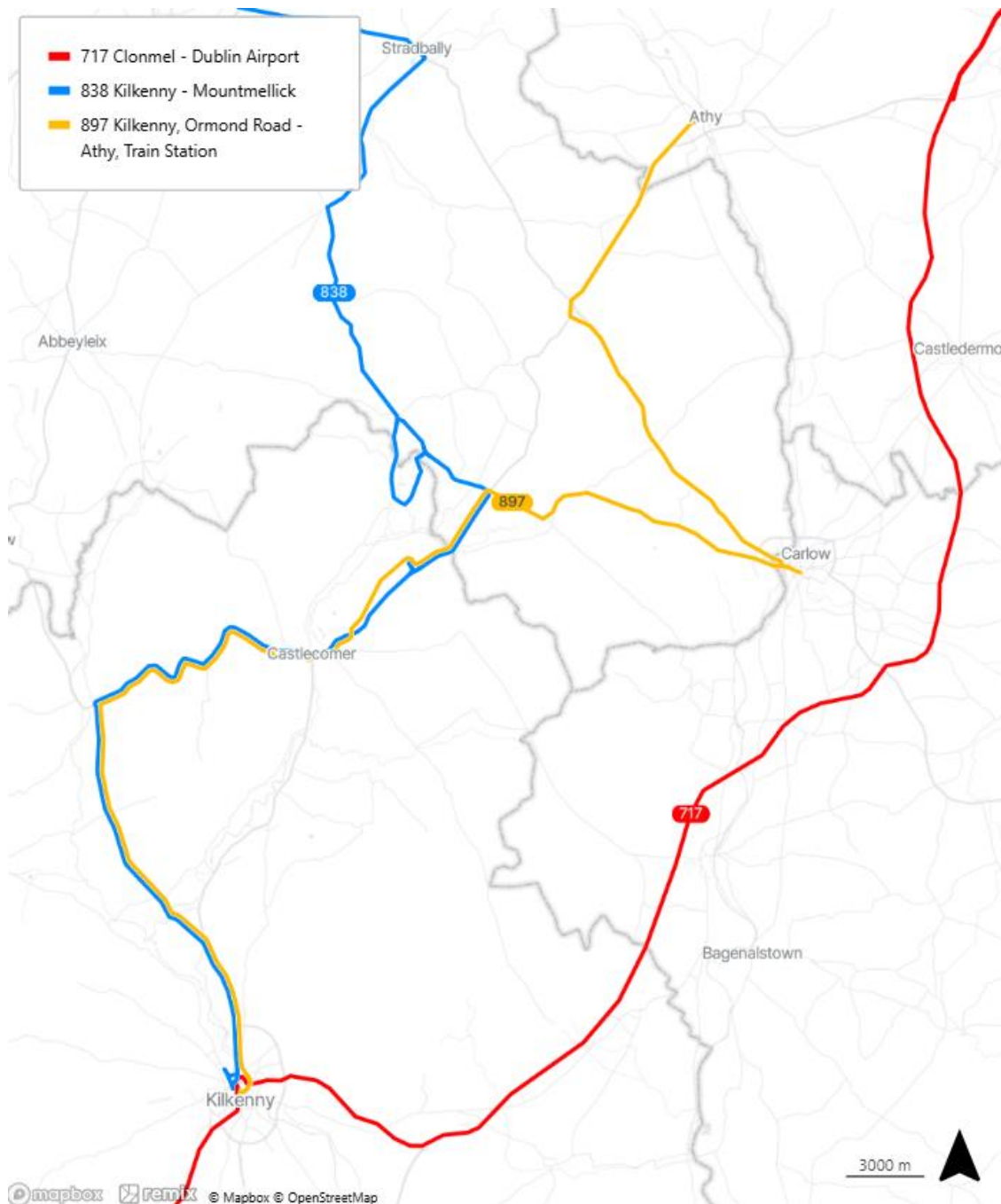
The population, c1,500 people, of Castlecomer is now served by the services outlined in Table 4 below.

*Table 4 – Castlecomer Bus Timetable*

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Castlecomer Stopping Times						
				Monday to Saturday				Sunday and Bank Holidays		
838	Slieve Bloom	Portlaoise	Kilkenny	10:30	15:35					
		Kilkenny	Portlaoise	12:17	17:37					
897	Local Link	Athy	Kilkenny	08:00	12:40	16:40	21:10	11:40	16:40	21:10
		Kilkenny	Athy	05:32	10:07	14:17	18:47	09:17	14:17	18:42

These services are shown in Figure 2 below.





*Figure 2 – Route 717, 838 and 897*

While the Direct link from Castlecomer to Dublin is now severed as a result of the removal of Route 717, this connection is still provided via an interchange in either Kilkenny or Carlow. Both Routes 838 and 897 provide connections to Kilkenny, and Route 897 provides a connection to Carlow.

Passengers travelling from Castlecomer to Dublin would now travel via Carlow on the 897, a journey of approximately 34 minutes. These passengers then have interchange opportunities onto bus or rail services, taking on average 1 hour 40 minutes from Carlow to Dublin.

In total, this would amount to 2 hours 10 minutes journey time for this trip, which results in an increase of 30 minutes on the 1 hour 45 minutes previously offered via Route 717. The options for trips to Dublin are shown in Table 5 below.

*Table 5 – Castlecomer to Dublin Travel Options, post removal of 06:05 service to Dublin*

Option	Operator	Route	Origin Destination	Time	Travel Time
Common to both Options	Local Link	897	Castlecomer	05:32	32 mins
			Carlow Bus Station	06:04	
Option 1	Irish Rail	Intercity Train	Carlow Train Station	06:30	32 mins + 26 mins waiting time + 1 hr 12 mins = <b>2 hr 10 mins</b>
			Heuston Station	07:42	
Option 2	JJ Kavanagh	736	Carlow Coach Park	06:25	32 mins + 21 mins waiting time + 1 hr 45 mins = <b>2 hr 42 mins</b>
			Eden Quay	08:10	

In the opposite direction, there are similar options from Dublin back to Castlecomer in the evening. These options are provided via interchange in either Athy or Carlow and both options utilise Local Link Route 897. Table 6 below shows these options and associated travel times.

*Table 6 – Dublin to Castlecomer Travel Options, post removal of 18:00 service from Dublin*

Option	Operator	Route	Origin Destination	Time	Travel Time
Option 1	JJ Kavanagh	736	George's Quay	18:00	3 hr 11 mins
			Carlow Coach Park	19:40	
	Local Link	897	Carlow Bus Station	20:39	
			Castlecomer	21:11	
Option 2	Irish Rail	Intercity Train	Heuston Station	18:35	2 hr 36 mins
			Athy Train Station	19:20	
	Local Link	897	Athy Train Station	20:00	
			Castlecomer	21:11	

It should be noted that the timings for both the outbound and return journeys can be inconvenient as morning departures are slightly too early and evening return journeys arrive back too late.

Trips from Castlecomer to Clonmel can still be made with an interchange in Kilkenny via Route 897, approx. 38 minutes, and interchange onto Route 717 for approx. 50 minutes journey time.

In conclusion, the removal of Route 717 does have an impact on passengers travelling between local settlements and Dublin, in particular in the morning and evening.

## 2.3 Crettyard and Newtown

Similar to Castlecomer, Crettyard and Newtown have also been impacted by the removal of 3 inbound (to Dublin) and 2 return trips on Route 717, similar to those trips shown in Table 3 in previous section.

Crettyard is served by the services shown in Table 7.

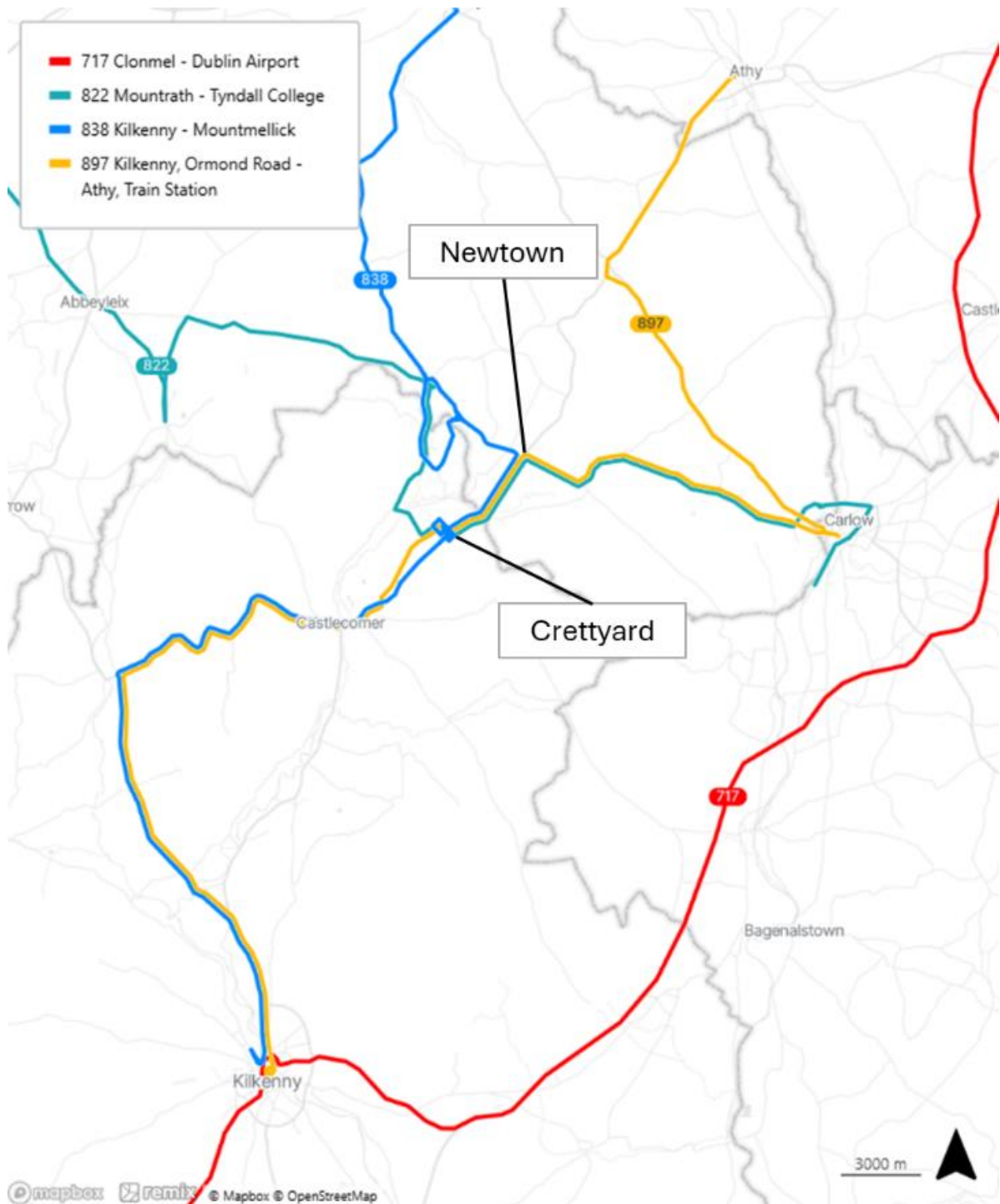
*Table 7 – Crettyard Bus Timetable*

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Crettyard Stopping Times						
				Monday to Saturday				Sunday and Bank Holidays		
822	Local Link	Mountrath	Carlow	08:16	12:01	16:06	20:01	09:31	13:06	16:41
		Carlow	Mountrath	09:47	13:47	17:47	21:24	11:07	14:42	19:37
897	Local Link	Athy	Kilkenny	07:54	12:34	16:34	21:04	11:34	16:34	21:04
		Kilkenny	Athy	05:39	10:14	14:24	18:54	09:24	14:24	18:49

The population of Newtown is 269 people. The routes and times of services serving Newtown are shown in Table 8 below.

*Table 8 – Newtown Bus Timetable*

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Newtown Stopping Times						
				Monday to Saturday				Sunday and Bank Holidays		
822	Local Link	Mountrath	Carlow	08:20	12:05	16:10	20:05	09:35	13:10	16:45
		Carlow	Mountrath	09:43	13:43	17:43	21:20	11:03	14:38	19:33
838	Slieve Bloom	Portlaoise	Kilkenny	10:15	15:20					
		Kilkenny	Portlaoise	12:30	17:50					
897	Local Link	Athy	Kilkenny	07:49	12:29	16:29	20:59	11:29	16:29	20:59
		Kilkenny	Athy	05:44	10:19	14:29	18:59	09:29	14:29	18:54



*Figure 3 - Route 717, 822, 838 and 897*

While the Direct link to Dublin is now severed as a result of the removal of Route 717, this connection is still provided via an indirect link to either Kilkenny or Carlow. Routes 838 and 897 provide connections to Kilkenny, and Routes 822 and 897 provide connections to Carlow. Journey times for connections from Crettyard and Newtown to and from Dublin are very similar to those shown in Table 5 and Table 6 in the previous section.

The impacts of the withdrawn Route 717 service are very similar to those outlined for Castlecomer. The first and last departures on Route 897 provide the best connections for those traveling to and from

Dublin via Carlow or Athy. In conclusion, the removal of Route 717 does have an impact on passengers travelling between local settlements and Dublin, particularly in the morning and evening times.

## 2.4 Ballylynan

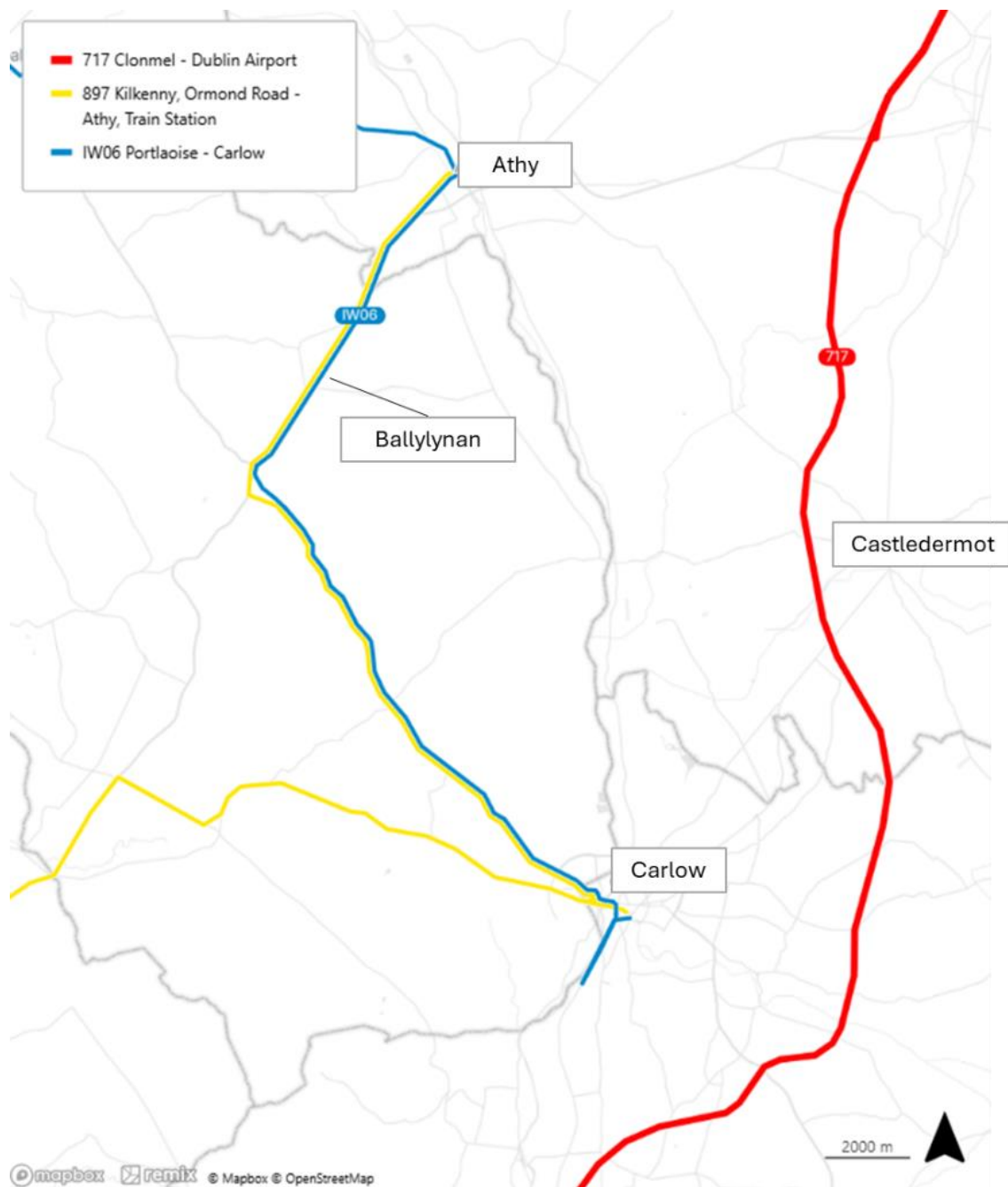
The population of Ballylynan c.1,167 as per the 2022 census, is currently served by the following routes.

*Table 9 – Ballylynan Bus Timetable*

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Ballylynan Stopping Times						
				Monday to Friday <sup>1</sup>				Saturday - Sunday		
IW06	JJ Kavanagh	Portlaoise	Carlow	07:45						
		Carlow	Portlaoise	16:50						
Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Monday to Saturday				Sunday and Bank Holidays		
897	Local Link	Athy	Kilkenny	07:03	11:43	15:43	20:13	10:43	15:43	20:13
		Kilkenny	Athy	06:30	11:05	15:15	19:45	10:15	15:15	19:40

These services are shown in Figure 4 below.

<sup>1</sup> Monday – Friday during College Term Only



*Figure 4 - Route 717, IW06 and 897*

Route 897 doesn't directly connect either Dublin or Clonmel. Therefore, passengers travelling to Dublin or Clonmel would have to interchange in Athy, Carlow or Kilkenny.

Journey times for connections from Ballylynan to and from Dublin are very similar to those shown in Table 5 and Table 6 in the Castlecomer section of this report. However, there are some additional interchange options for residents from Ballylynan for travel to and from Dublin.

*Table 10 –Ballylynan to Dublin Travel Options*

Option	Operator	Route	Origin Destination	Time	Travel Time
Option 1	Local Link	897	Ballylynan	06:30	1 hour 9 mins
			Athy	06:38	
	Irish Rail	Intercity Train	Athy Train Station	06:41	
			Dublin Heuston	07:24	

*Table 11 – Dublin to Ballylynan Travel Options*

Option	Operator	Route	Origin Destination	Time	Travel Time
Option 1	Irish Rail	Intercity Train	Heuston Station	17:35	2 hours 10 mins
			Athy Train Station	18:35	
	Local Link	897	Carlow Coach Park	19:19	
			Ballylynan	19:45	

Similar to the other towns impacted by the withdrawal of Route 717, travel options to and from Dublin have reduced.

In conclusion, the removal of Route 717 does have an impact on passengers travelling between local settlements and Dublin, in particular at morning and evening times.

## 2.5 Athy and Kilcullen

Although Athy and Kilcullen are no longer served by Route 717, these locations still have good connections to both Carlow, Naas and Dublin.

The population of Athy (c.11,000 people) is served by the following services:

Table 12 – Athy Bus Timetable

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Athy Stopping Times								
				Monday to Friday			Saturday			Sunday and Bank Holidays		
130	Go Ahead	Athy Athy Dublin Naas	Dublin Naas Athy Athy	06:00								
				09:50	13:20		09:50	13:20	15:20	10:00	13:50	15:50
				20:18								
				12:53	14:58	23:43	12:53	14:53	19:23	13:23	15:23	19:23
IW06 <sup>2</sup>	J.J Kavanagh & Sons	Portlaoise  Carlow Bus Station	Carlow Bus Station  Portlaoise	07:55								
				17:27								
UM06 <sup>3</sup>	J.J Kavanagh & Sons	Athy  Maynooth	Maynooth  Athy	07:05								
				18:05								
Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Monday to Saturday						Sunday and Bank Holidays		
883	TFI Local Link	Athy Newbridge	Newbridge Athy	07:40	10:30	14:00	16:45	19:00	21:45			
				10:05	12:55	16:25	18:50	21:40	00:00			
897	Local Link	Athy Kilkenny	Kilkenny Athy	06:50	11:30	15:30	20:00			10:30	15:30	20:00
				06:38	11:13	15:23	19:53			10:23	15:23	19:48

<sup>2</sup> College Term Only

<sup>3</sup> College Term Only



In addition to the above bus services, Athy is also served by the Rail line with services between Dublin and Waterford. There are 11 trains a day Mon-Fri, 8 on Saturday and 5 on Sunday.

The population of Kilcullen is served by the following bus routes:

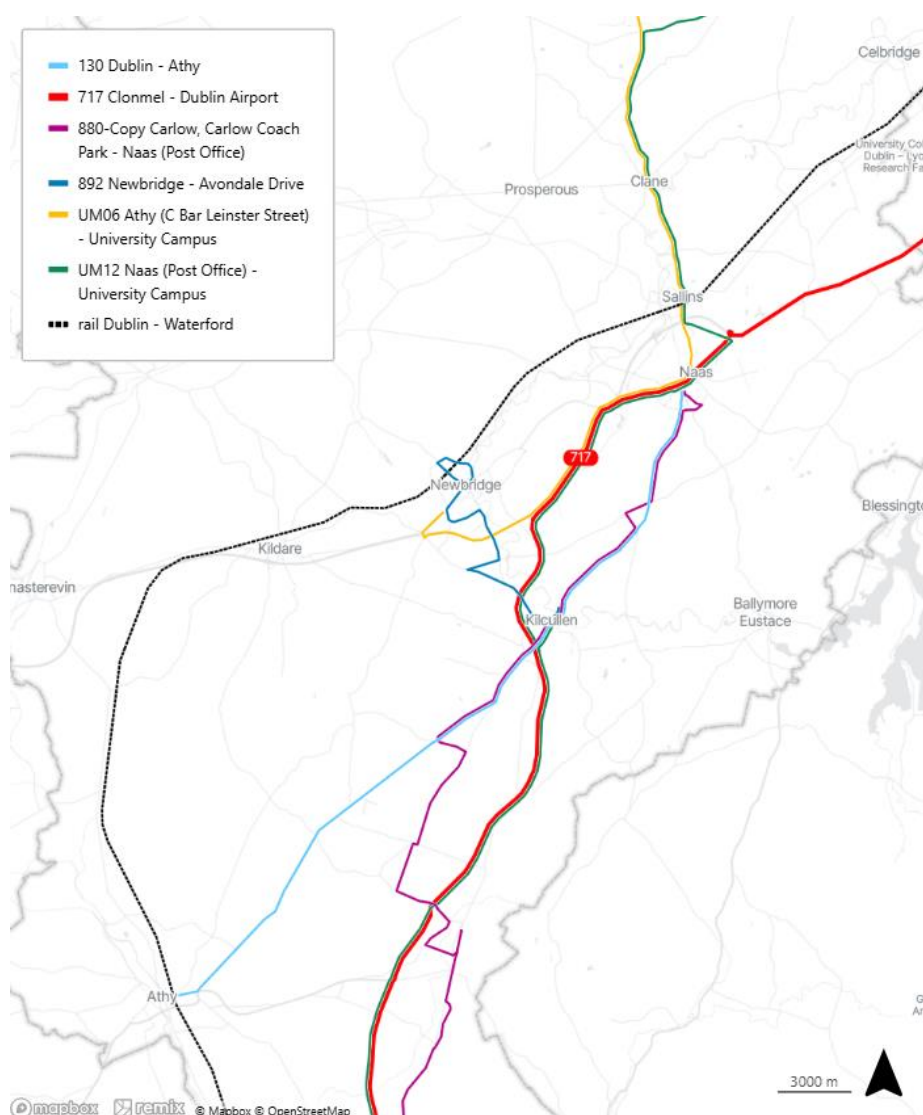
Table 13 – Kilcullen Bus Timetable

Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Kilcullen Stopping Times														
				Monday to Friday						Saturday				Sunday and Bank Holidays				
130	Go Ahead	Kilcullen	Dublin	06:22	07:05	15:37												
		Kilcullen	Naas	10:12	13:42	07:52 10:12 13:42 15:42						10:22	14:12 16:12					
		Dublin	Kilcullen	18:38	19:54													
		Naas	Kilcullen	12:31	14:34	23:21	12:31 14:38 19:08						13:01	15:01 19:01				
UM06 <sup>4</sup>	J.J Kavanagh & Sons	Athy	Maynooth	07:25														
		Maynooth	Athy	18:50														
UM12 <sup>5</sup>	J.J Kavanagh & Sons	Carlow / Kilkenny	Maynooth	07:30	12:30													
		Maynooth	Carlow / Kilkenny	10:00	18:40													
Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Monday to Saturday								Sunday and Bank Holidays						
892	TFI Local Link	Newbridge	Kilcullen	07:21	08:49	11:52	13:53	16:37	18:13	20:02	22:12	08:49	11:52	13:53	16:37	18:13	20:02	22:12
		Kilcullen	Newbridge	06:30	07:39	09:50	12:09	14:49	16:59	18:59	21:09	07:39	09:50	12:09	14:49	16:59	18:59	21:09
Route	Operator	Origin	Destination	Monday to Sunday and Bank Holidays														
880	TFI Local Link	Carlow Bus Station	Naas	07:59	10:14	12:14	14:14	16:14	18:29	20:29	22:45							
		Naas	Carlow Bus Station	07:38	09:38	11:38	13:38	15:38	17:53	19:53	23:35							

<sup>4</sup> College Term Only

<sup>5</sup> College Term Only

These services are shown in Figure 5 below.



*Figure 5 - Services between Athy, Kilcullen and Naas*

For both Athy and Kilcullen Route 130 provides direct services to and from Dublin in addition to Routes 838 and 892 which provide a number of services to and from Newbridge, providing interchange opportunities for services to Dublin. Athy also has direct rail services to Dublin.

Route 880 provides a further connection from Kilcullen to Naas, as well as additional interchange opportunities to Dublin.

It should be noted that the 130 service is being enhanced, and this is estimated to take place in Q4 2025. The new timetable will provide additional departures from Athy and Kilcullen to Naas and also Sallins Train Station.

## 2.6 Naas

Naas has a population of approximately 26,000. The town has good connections to both Athy and Kilcullen, as shown in Table 12 and Table 13. In addition, it also has good public transport links to

other surrounding towns. Naas also benefits from good links to Dublin via Route 126, operated by Go-Ahead Ireland, and Route 726, operated by Dublin Coach. Naas is also near the Rail network via Sallins Train Station, which is served by both Commuter and InterCity rail services.

Although Naas has been impacted by the withdrawal of this variation of Route 717, the level of service and connections remain adequate.

### 3. Conclusions

In conclusion, the license amendment for Route 717 has a negative impact on the residents of Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown Cross and Ballylynan. While there are some impacts on the settlements of Athy and Kilcullen, there are good connections to surrounding settlements and direct connections to Dublin via Rail and Route 130. There is also a planned enhancement to the existing Route 130 service, which will provide additional services for residents of Athy and Kilcullen

The main impacts result in increased journey times for those travelling from these locations to and from Dublin.

To address this issue and enhance connectivity for the impacted settlements, the NTA will review and optimise the timetable on Route 897 (Kilkenny - Athy). The purpose of this optimisation process is to add additional departures to better provide for morning and evening return trips to Dublin for the settlements of Castlecomer, Crettyard, Newtown and Ballylynan. This adjustment aims to mitigate the impact of the Route 717 amendment and ensure continued accessibility.

## 4. Determination

The Authority has determined that there is a public service obligation to improve the service levels on the Kilkenny to Athy section of the Dublin Airport – Clonmel corridor. As a result of this determination, I recommend that the Authority should now carry out an optimisation of Route 897 with the objective being to address service gaps.

*Dominic Hannigan*

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**Dominic Hannigan**

**Head of Public Transport Regulation**

Approved:

*Hugh Creegan*

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**Hugh Creegan**

**Chief Executive Officer**

Dated: