

# Determination of a Public Service Obligation following withdrawal of services between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny



# 1. Introduction

In May 2026 Bernard Kavanagh & Sons notified the NTA of its decision to cease operation of Route 881 (Graigenamanagh - Kilkenny), the final day of operation will be Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

This report provides an overview of the impact along the corridor, and surrounding areas, from which the service will be withdrawn. The report also evaluates whether the withdrawal of the service creates a requirement for new or revised Public Service Obligation (PSO) route to maintain essential public transport provision.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for securing the provision of subsidised public passenger transport services where a Public Service Obligation (PSO) has been identified. The services in question are currently being delivered on a commercial basis by Bernard Kavanagh & Sons. In circumstances where a commercial operator ceases or curtails services, the NTA will examine whether, in the absence of any commercial services, a public service obligation (PSO) exists to provide socially necessary but commercially unviable public transport services. Such examination will include an assessment of the demand for public transport services and options to either re-configure existing PSO services including Local Link services, or to competitively tender for the provision of services. In either event, the NTA's ability to provide such services is subject to the availability of funding.

NTA has a strong record of carrying out such assessments when market conditions change and in particular when commercial operators decide to withdraw wholly, or in part, from providing services in any given location or along a corridor.

## 2. Service Withdrawal

Following engagement with Bernard Kavanagh & Sons, the National Transport Authority has been formally advised of the operator’s intention to withdraw Route 881 (Graiguenamanagh – Kilkenny) in its entirety. Bernard Kavanagh & Sons has confirmed that the cessation of services will apply across the full length of the route, with no partial retention of any section or modification to the existing service alignment.

The proposed withdrawal therefore represents a complete removal of the current service offering along the corridor, including all intermediate stops and connections currently served by Route 881.

### 2.1 Existing Timetable

As shown in Table 1, Route 881 currently operates two return trips daily between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny (Monday to Saturday). Route 881 serves the following settlements: Graiguenamanagh, Borris, Goresbridge, Gowran, Clara and Kilkenny.

*Table 1 – Timetable for Route 881*

Graiguenamanagh to Kilkenny					
Stop Location	Stop Name	Stops Coordinates	Restrictions	MO-SA	
Graiguenamanagh	Bank of Ireland	52.54239, -6.95625	<b>PUO;KKC</b>	07:45	14:00
Borris	Main Street	52.60018, -6.92392	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	08:00	14:15
Goresbridge	Crossroads	52.62959, -6.99422	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	08:10	14:25
Gowran	Main Street	52.62946, -7.06471	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	08:20	14:35
Clara	Village	52.64551, -7.15405	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	08:30	14:45
Kilkenny	McDonagh Train Station	52.65388, -7.24418	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	08:35	14:45
Kilkenny	The Parade	52.64946, -7.24821	<b>SDO;KKC</b>	08:40	14:55

Kilkenny to Graiguenamanagh					
Stop Location	Stop Name	Stops Coordinates	Restrictions	MO-SA	
Kilkenny	The Parade	52.64946, -7.24821	<b>PUO;KKC</b>	12:00	18:05
Kilkenny	McDonagh Train Station	52.65388, -7.24418	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	12:05	18:10
Clara	Village	52.64551, -7.15405	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	12:10	18:15
Gowran	Main Street	52.62946, -7.06471	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	12:20	18:25
Goresbridge	Crossroads	52.62959, -6.99422	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	12:30	18:35
Borris	Main Street	52.60018, -6.92392	<b>P/S;KKC</b>	12:40	18:45
Graiguenamanagh	Bank of Ireland	52.54239, -6.95625	<b>SDO;KKC</b>	12:55	19:00

## 2.2 Route Map

Figure 1 shows Route 881 serving the following settlements: Kilkenny, Gowran, Goresbridge, Borris, and Graiguenamanagh.

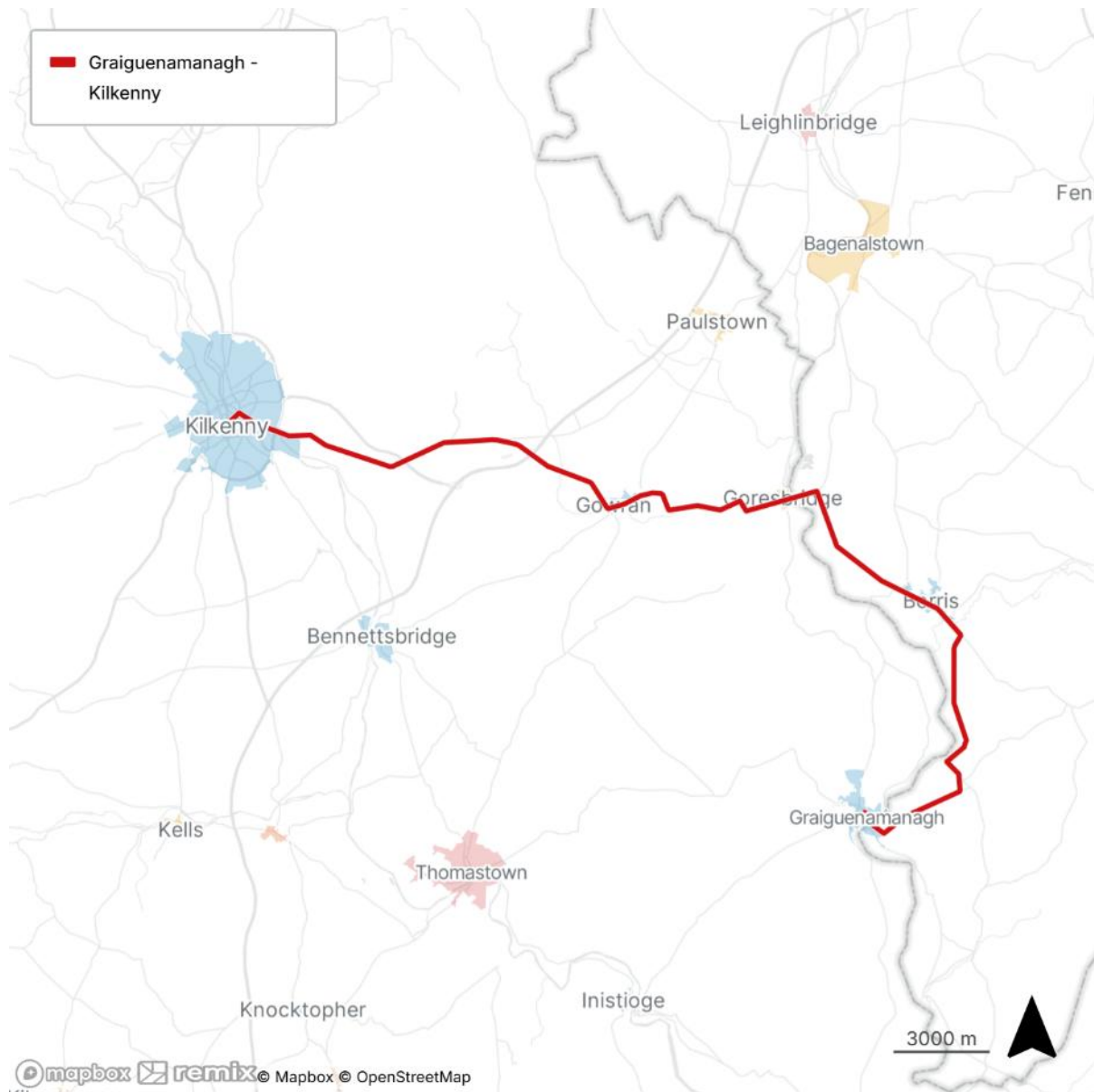


Figure 1 - Route 881 alignment

### 2.3 Demand Analysis

Table 2 presents observed travel demand between Graiguenamanagh, Borris, Goresbridge, Gowran and Kilkenny using 2022 Census POWSCCAR data. POWSCCAR stands for Place of Work, School, College or Childcare Census of Anonymised Records. This dataset records anonymised origin–destination movements between people’s usual residence and their place of work, school, college or childcare.

The matrix therefore shows existing travel demand for work and education-related purposes across all modes of transport. It does not represent public transport demand alone, but it provides a useful indication of the scale and direction of current travel flows that could potentially be served by improved public transport provision.

Table 2 - OD Matrix (2022 census data: all modes, school and work purposes)

	Graiguenamanagh	Borris	Goresbridge	Gowran	Kilkenny	Total
Graiguenamanagh		37	2	6	61	106
Borris	0		2	2	24	28
Goresbridge	2	22		4	28	56
Gowran	4	17	4		163	188
Kilkenny	2	17	6	15		40
Total	8	93	14	27	276	418

### 2.4 Connecting Ireland Standard

Connecting Ireland is the National Transport Authority’s rural mobility plan, developed to improve public transport connectivity for towns, villages and rural communities outside the main urban areas. The programme aims to address gaps in the existing public transport network by introducing new services, enhancing existing routes, and improving links to employment, education, healthcare, retail and onward public transport connections.

As shown in Figure 2, Connecting Ireland aims to achieve a minimum level of service of three buses a day between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny. The withdrawal of Route 881 would result in a complete removal of public transport services along this corridor.

Proposal	Connecting	Serving*	Description
881	Kilkenny	Graiguenamanagh	Goresbridge, Borris and other places en route
We propose to increase the frequency of route 881 from Kilkenny to Graiguenamanagh. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.			

Figure 2 - Connecting Ireland proposed service level on Kilkenny – Graiguenamanagh Corridor

## 2.5 Graiguenamanagh - Kilkenny Corridor Analysis

The Graiguenamanagh–Kilkenny corridor, when considered in its entirety, is currently served exclusively by Route 881. However, it is noted that Route 887 (TFI Local Link) operates along certain sections of this corridor, but does not provide end-to-end coverage between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny.

Route 887 (Carlow–New Ross) operates three return services per day, Monday to Sunday. As shown in Table 3, this service serves Borris and Tinnahinch (O’Driscoll’s Bar), the latter located approximately 400 metres from the Route 881 stop at Graiguenamanagh (Bank of Ireland).

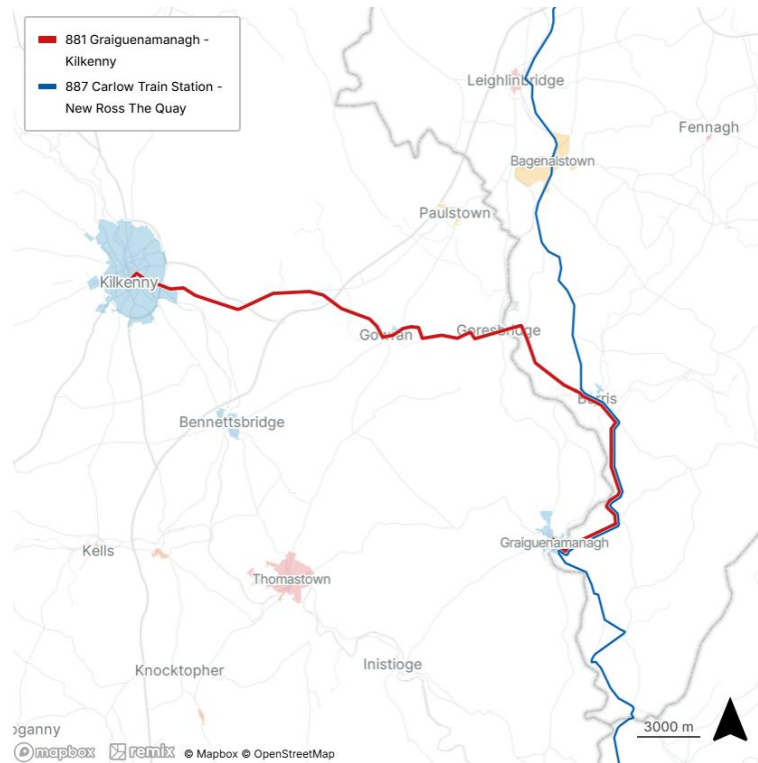
Table 3 - Route 887 New Ross - Carlow Timetable

NEW ROSS - CARLOW							
Departs	Stops	Monday - Saturday			Sunday		
New Ross	The Quay- SuperValu Bus Stop	07:05	11:30	16:00	08:00	12:30	17:00
New Ross	Apex Centre Irishtown	07:10	11:35	16:05	08:05	12:35	17:05
Ballynabanoge Cross	Ballynabanoge Junction R729	07:21	11:46	16:16	08:16	12:46	17:16
Drummond	Church	07:25	11:50	16:20	08:20	12:50	17:20
St. Mullins	Old Post Office	07:29	11:54	16:24	08:24	12:54	17:24
Glynn	Church Entrance	07:34	11:59	16:29	08:29	12:59	17:29
Tinnahinch	O’Driscoll’s Bar	07:45	12:10	16:40	08:40	13:10	17:40
Skeagh Cross	Cross Roads	07:50	12:15	16:45	08:45	13:15	17:45
Borris	Dalton Square	08:00	12:25	16:55	08:55	13:25	17:55
Borris	Woodlawn Park	08:03	12:28	16:58	08:58	13:28	17:58
Clowater	Junction R705 Cross Roads	08:08	12:33	17:03	09:03	13:33	18:03
Bagenalstown	Certa Petrol Station	08:16	12:41	17:11	09:11	13:41	18:11
Bagenalstown	Aldi	08:18	12:43	17:13	09:13	13:43	18:13
Leighlinbridge	Lord Bagenal Inn	08:23	12:48	17:18	09:18	13:48	18:18
Carlow	Tyndall College Bus Stop	08:34	12:59	17:29	09:29	13:59	18:29
Carlow	IT Carlow Bus Stop	08:38	13:03	17:33	09:33	14:03	18:33
Carlow	Coach Park	08:42	13:07	17:37	09:37	14:07	18:37
Carlow	Train Station	08:46	13:11	17:41	09:41	14:11	18:41

CARLOW - NEW ROSS							
Departs	Stops	Monday - Saturday			Sunday		
Carlow	Train Station	09:00	13:30	18:00	10:15	14:30	18:50
Carlow	Coach Park	09:07	13:37	18:07	10:22	14:37	18:57
Carlow	IT Carlow Bus Stop	09:10	13:40	18:10	10:25	14:40	19:00
Carlow	Tyndall College Bus Stop	09:13	13:43	18:13	10:28	14:43	19:03
Leighlinbridge	Lord Bagenal Inn	09:24	13:54	18:24	10:39	14:54	19:14
Bagenalstown	Aldi	09:29	13:59	18:29	10:44	14:59	19:19
Bagenalstown	Certa Petrol Station	09:33	14:04	18:35	10:50	15:03	19:23
Clowater	Junction R705 Cross Roads	09:41	14:12	18:43	10:58	15:11	19:31
Borris	Woodlawn Park	09:43	14:14	18:45	11:00	15:13	19:33
Borris	Dalton Square	09:45	14:16	18:47	11:02	15:15	19:35
Skeagh Cross	Cross Roads	09:52	14:23	18:54	11:09	15:22	19:42
Tinnahinch	O’Driscoll’s Bar	10:00	14:31	19:02	11:17	15:30	19:50
Glynn	Byrne’s Pub	10:08	14:39	19:10	11:25	15:38	19:58
St. Mullins	Old Post Office	10:13	14:44	19:15	11:30	15:43	20:03
Drummond	Drummond Church	10:18	14:49	19:20	11:35	15:48	20:08
Ballynabanoge Cross	Ballynabanoge Junction R729	10:24	14:55	19:26	11:41	15:54	20:14
New Ross	Irishtown Apex Centre	10:34	15:05	19:36	11:51	16:04	20:24
New Ross	Quay Bus Stop	10:40	15:10	19:40	11:55	16:10	20:30

Figure 3 shows both Route 881 and Route 887 and the overlapping section between Borris and Graiguenamanagh. Route 887 diverges from Route 881 at Borris to provide a connection to Carlow while Route 881 extends to Kilkenny. As highlighted in Figure 3 Route 887 does not provide like for like coverage of Route 881. While a degree of interchange or proximity-based connectivity may be available at the southern end of the corridor, the service does not replicate the alignment of Route 881 and does not provide continuous end-to-end coverage between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny.



*Figure 3 - Main bus services running between Kilkenny and Graigueanamanagh*

Despite the presence of Route 887 operating along part of the corridor, coverage is not consistent across its full extent. In particular, the withdrawal of Route 881 would leave the section between Kilkenny and Borris unserved by public transport. As a result, passengers travelling between Kilkenny and Borris would have no access to public transport services along this section of the corridor.

## 2.6 Addressing the Service Gap

The withdrawal of Route 881 (Graigueanamanagh –Kilkenny) will result in a gap in service provision along the Kilkenny - Borris section of the corridor, particularly along the R712 and R702 alignment.

In order to maintain an appropriate level of public transport provision, action will be required by the Authority to investigate options to address the identified service gap and to ensure that connectivity for the affected settlements is maintained in line with Connecting Ireland objectives and standards.

### 3. Conclusions

The withdrawal of Route 881 would result in a material reduction in public transport provision along the Graiguenamanagh–Kilkenny corridor and would create a significant service gap, particularly on the Kilkenny–Borris section of the route. Route 881 currently provides an important all-stop service serving intermediate settlements along the R712 and R702 alignment. Its removal would therefore reduce accessibility for communities that are dependent on this corridor for access to Kilkenny and other local centres.

While Route 887 operates on part of the wider corridor, it does not provide coverage on the Kilkenny–Borris section. As a result, the withdrawal of Route 881 would leave passengers travelling between Kilkenny and Borris without a public transport option, while also reducing the overall level of service available between Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny.

The remaining services on the corridor would not be sufficient to maintain the existing level of provision and would fall short of the minimum service level identified under the Connecting Ireland programme. This is particularly significant given the role of Connecting Ireland in improving rural public transport connectivity and addressing gaps in service provision.


On this basis, the withdrawal of Route 881 gives rise to a requirement to examine and progress appropriate measures to maintain public transport coverage along the corridor. These measures should seek to address the identified service gap between Kilkenny and Borris, maintain connectivity for intermediate settlements, and ensure that the overall level of provision on the Graiguenamanagh–Kilkenny corridor remains consistent with Connecting Ireland objectives.

## 4. Determination

The Authority has determined that the cessation of Route 881 would result in a material reduction in public transport provision along the Graigueanamagh–Kilkenny corridor and would create identified gaps in service coverage, particularly on the Kilkenny–Borris section.

Having regard to the need to maintain an appropriate level of public transport connectivity on the corridor, the Authority considers that a Public Service Obligation intervention is required for the Kilkenny–Borris section. It is therefore recommended that the Authority progress the necessary steps to put in place an appropriate service response. Any such response should address the identified gaps and support affected settlements. Implementation would be subject to funding availability, completion of the necessary approvals, and operational readiness.

Signed by:




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**Philip Kavanagh**

**Public Transport Integration Manager**

Approved:

Signed by:



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**Anne Shaw**

**Chief Executive Officer**

Dated: 25 June 2026 | 12:45:50 PM BST