



Connecting Ireland and Rural Public Transport Investment- Opportunities for Rural Regeneration

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Rural Transport Case Study – Laois Offaly

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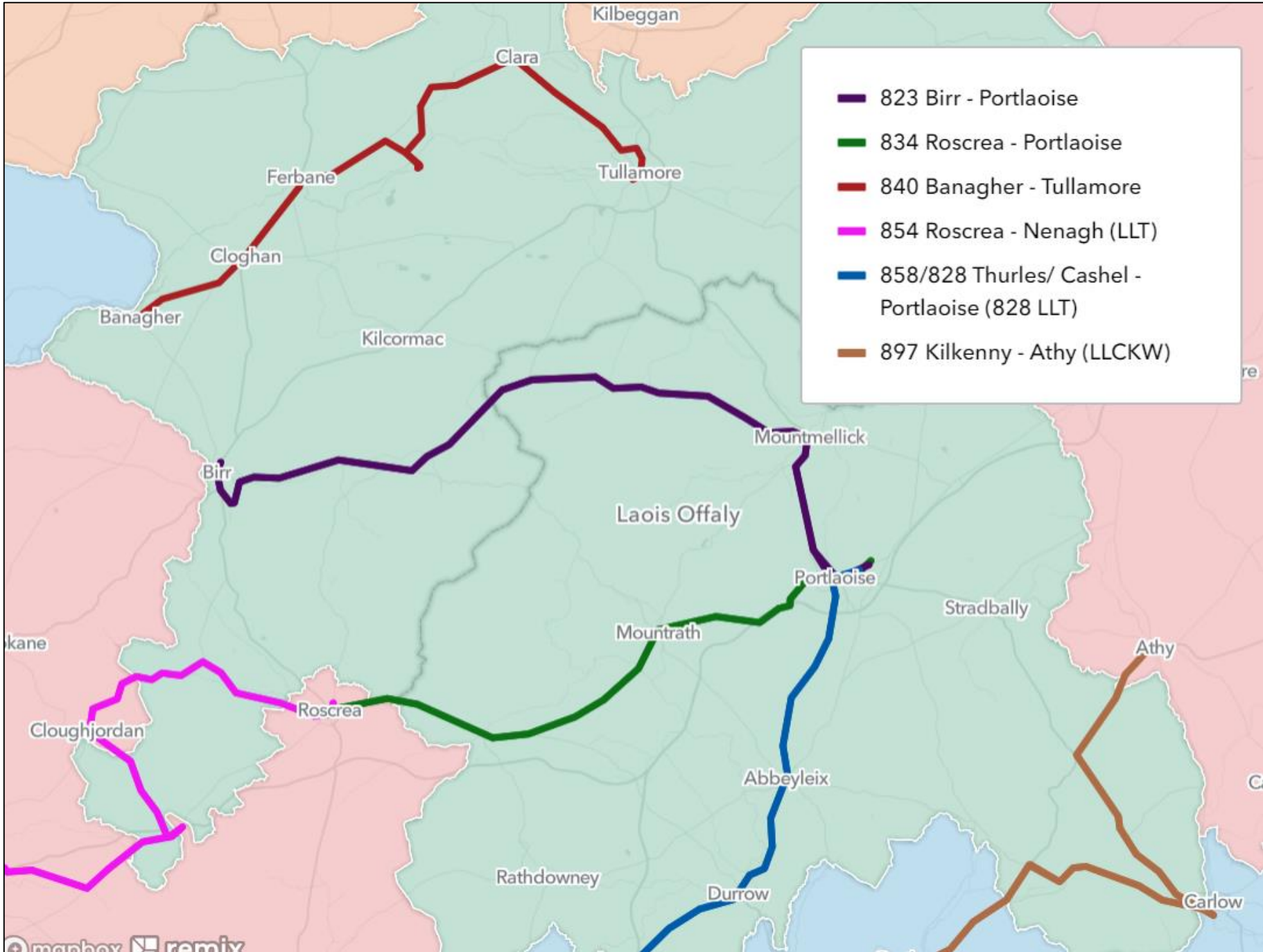
Rural Transport – Case Study – Laois Offaly

- TFI Local Link Laois Offaly is one of 15 nationwide Transport Coordination Units (TCU), for the National Transport Authority.
- We are a charitable Company with a voluntary Board of Directors who represent many of the public bodies, from the local authority, Laois Partnership, Offaly Local Development Company, the Public Participation Network and the Education Training Boards along with community representatives.
- Our office is based in Laois County Council Buildings, Portlaoise and comprises of 4 full time staff
 - Manager
 - Finance & Compliance Administrator
 - Dispatch & Media Officer
 - Dispatch & Compliance Officer

Transport Coordination Unit Laois Offaly - Remit

- The TCU's remit is to manage the Rural Transport Programme on the ground and develop and grow future services for the National Transport Authority.
- TFI Local Link has two types of services which are open for all to use and we accept the free travel pass card. Service types are:
 - Door to door services (Demand Responsive Transport) which are pre-booked a day in advance. TFI Local Link Laois Offaly have 62 door to door services and 11 of these services connect to Athlone TUS, Maynooth and local Education Training Centres across both counties.
 - Regular Rural Services, RRS, which operate on a fixed route between towns and villages. TFI Local Link Laois Offaly have 4 in operation and 1 in tender stage at present.
- All our services are tendered out to a pre-qualified operator's panel. This panel is open to all operators to register on at any time and is accessed through etenders.
- All services are operated with buses that are branded under the TFI Local Link logos. Generally, all contracts are of a 4 year duration.

**Local Link –
Regular Rural
Services Laois
Offaly Area**



Connecting Ireland Programme and the TFI Local Link TCU

There are a number of stages in planning a route until it goes into operation.

- The TCU works collaboratively with the Connecting Ireland team within the NTA. Routes have been identified through the public consultation process and by mapping existing services and realising the deficits that appear.
- At early stages of the route planning, input from the TCU is submitted to the Connecting Ireland team which would determine times or route patterns for known local needs. Collectively these are pulled together and draft timetables and routes tested before putting out to tender. During testing, we may engage a bus and driver to drive the route to assess vehicle size, geographical issues and timings.
- Next stage is procurement where the registered panel will all be notified of the upcoming service going to tender.
 1. Expression of Interest, EOI – operators on the panel confirm their intention to tender.
 2. Release of Tender Documents to the interested parties from EOI stage.
 3. Evaluation of Tenders – undertaken independently by the Contracts Managers from the NTA's Rural Transport Team.
 4. Award of Tender.

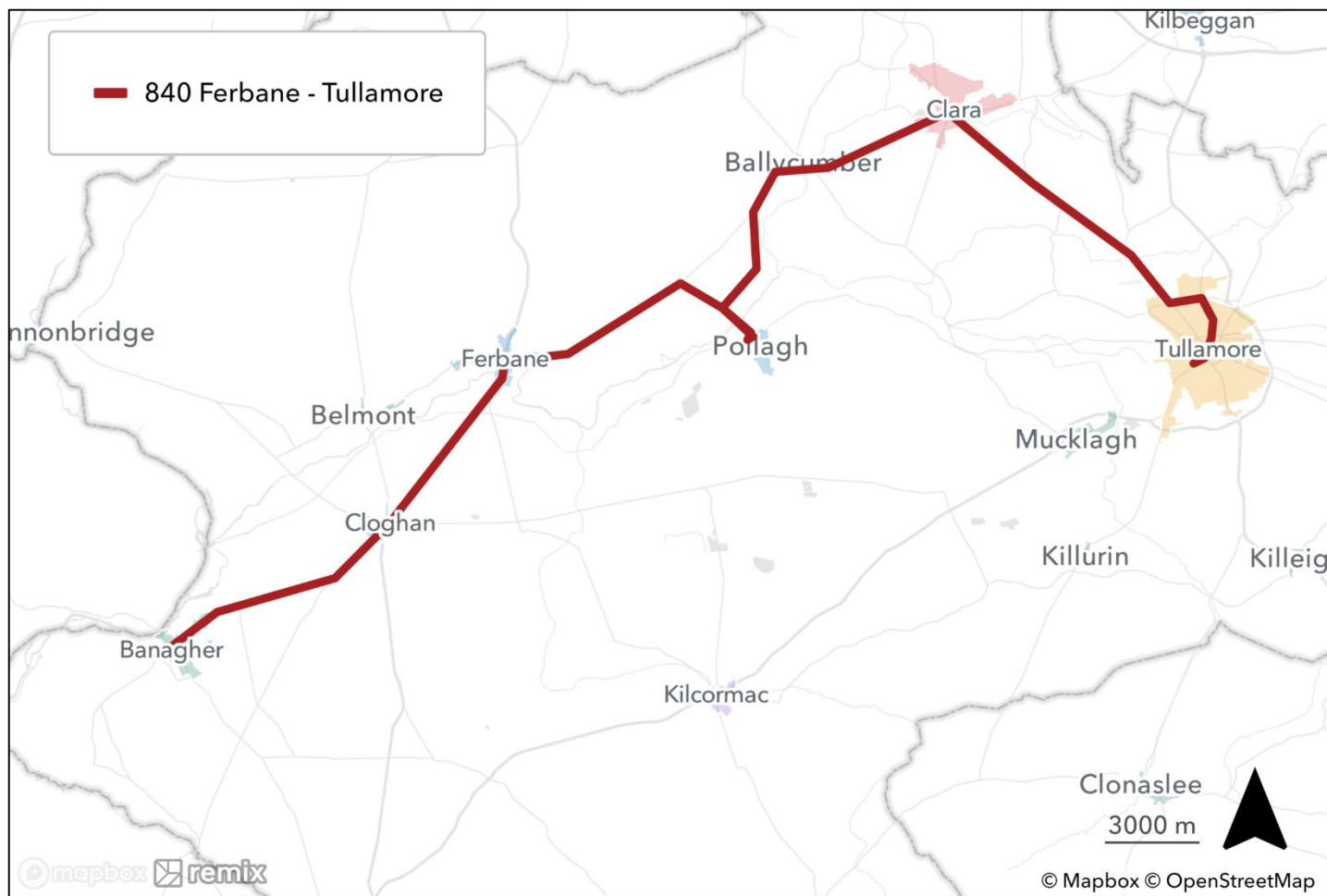
Issues with commencing services

In the last two years, many delays in starting a service have arisen:

- Due to lack of buses from the fallout of Covid and the war in Ukraine impacting construction and bus components to be obtained for manufacture;
- Brexit has decreased the number of buses available in the second-hand market due to import charges;
- A lack of available drivers which is continuing to affect the volume of services we will be able to undertake;
- In relation to bus stop infrastructure, we still have a long way to improve and install bus stop infrastructure on the ground;
- Proper bus bays to facilitate low floor accessible buses in the main towns, real time information boards and bus poles are in low supply in rural Ireland and need to be addressed and included in our local authority transport plans and prioritised by the NTA; and
- The Connecting Ireland programme will see greater sustainable mobility in rural Ireland but needs infrastructure to optimise its full potential.

840 – Case Study

- TFI Local Link Laois Offaly under the Connecting Ireland programme have enhanced our existing 840 Banagher to Tullamore service which now operates 7 days a week, an increase from 5 days a week and the route extended to Banagher and Tullamore from its original Pollagh to Clara.
- With this enhancement, in June 2021, we complimented timings with a private operator across the route and increased frequency for the local towns.



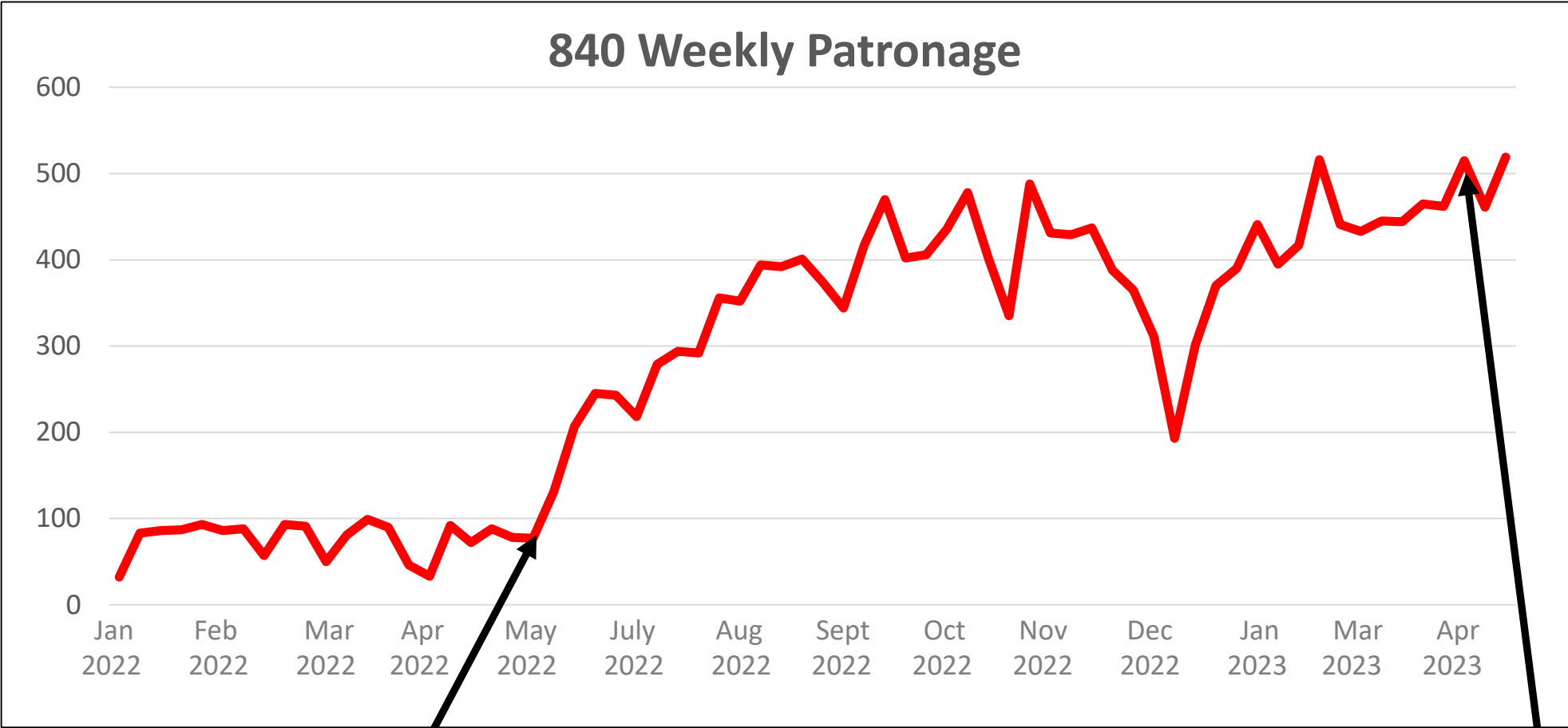
Timetable Design

- Peak morning/evening service into and from Tullamore for work and education journeys.
- Weekend service/ later evening services.
- Memorable/ legible timetable.
- Consistent routing throughout week.
- Route serving key destinations including hospital and Tullamore train station.

| 840 Banagher to Tullamore | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| BANAGHER TO TULLAMORE | | | | | | | | | | |
| Departs | Stops | Monday to Friday | | | | | Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays | | | |
| Banagher | <i>Library</i> | 07:30 | 11:00 | 14:10 | 17:00 | 19:40 | 07:30 | 11:00 | 15:00 | 19:40 |
| Cloghan | <i>Bus Éireann Stop</i> | 07:40 | 11:10 | 14:20 | 17:10 | 19:50 | 07:40 | 11:10 | 15:10 | 19:50 |
| Ferbane | <i>Gallen School</i> | 07:46 | 11:16 | 14:26 | 17:16 | 19:56 | 07:46 | 11:16 | 15:16 | 19:56 |
| Pollagh | <i>Church</i> | 08:00 | 11:30 | 14:40 | 17:30 | 20:10 | 08:00 | 11:30 | 15:30 | 20:10 |
| Ballycumber | <i>Post Office</i> | 08:13 | 11:43 | 14:53 | 17:43 | 20:23 | 08:13 | 11:43 | 15:43 | 20:23 |
| Clara | <i>Church</i> | 08:19 | 11:49 | 14:59 | 17:49 | 20:29 | 08:19 | 11:49 | 15:49 | 20:29 |
| Clara | <i>Train Station</i> | 08:21 | 11:51 | 15:01 | 17:51 | 20:31 | 08:21 | 11:51 | 15:51 | 20:31 |
| Tullamore | <i>Hospital</i> | 08:34 | 12:04 | 15:14 | 18:04 | 20:44 | 08:34 | 12:04 | 16:04 | 20:44 |
| Tullamore | <i>Bus Éireann Stop, Kilbeggan Bridge</i> | 08:40 | 12:10 | 15:20 | 18:10 | 20:50 | 08:40 | 12:10 | 16:10 | 20:50 |
| Tullamore | <i>Train Station</i> | 08:45 | 12:15 | 15:25 | 18:15 | 20:55 | 08:45 | 12:15 | 16:15 | 20:55 |

| TULLAMORE TO BANAGHER | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Departs | Stops | Monday to Friday | | | | | Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays | | | |
| Tullamore | <i>Train Station</i> | 09:00 | 12:15 | 15:40 | 18:20 | 21:00 | 09:00 | 12:15 | 16:50 | 21:00 |
| Tullamore | <i>Bus Éireann Stop, Kilbeggan Bridge</i> | 09:05 | 12:20 | 15:45 | 18:25 | 21:05 | 09:05 | 12:20 | 16:55 | 21:05 |
| Tullamore | <i>Hospital</i> | 09:11 | 12:26 | 15:51 | 18:31 | 21:11 | 09:11 | 12:26 | 17:01 | 21:11 |
| Clara | <i>Church</i> | 09:24 | 12:39 | 16:04 | 18:44 | 21:24 | 09:24 | 12:39 | 17:14 | 21:24 |
| Clara | <i>Train Station</i> | 09:26 | 12:41 | 16:06 | 18:46 | 21:26 | 09:26 | 12:41 | 17:16 | 21:26 |
| Ballycumber | <i>Post Office</i> | 09:33 | 12:48 | 16:13 | 18:53 | 21:33 | 09:33 | 12:48 | 17:23 | 21:33 |
| Pollagh | <i>Church</i> | 09:45 | 13:00 | 16:25 | 19:05 | 21:45 | 09:45 | 13:00 | 17:35 | 21:45 |
| Ferbane | <i>Gallen School</i> | 09:59 | 13:14 | 16:39 | 19:19 | 21:59 | 09:59 | 13:14 | 17:49 | 21:59 |
| Cloghan | <i>Bus Éireann Stop</i> | 10:06 | 13:21 | 16:46 | 19:26 | 22:06 | 10:06 | 13:21 | 17:56 | 22:06 |
| Banagher | <i>Library</i> | 10:17 | 13:32 | 16:57 | 19:37 | 22:17 | 10:17 | 13:32 | 18:07 | 22:17 |

840 Performance



The growth of this service was instant from the start of the enhancement (June 2022)

400% increase in patronage since service enhancement.

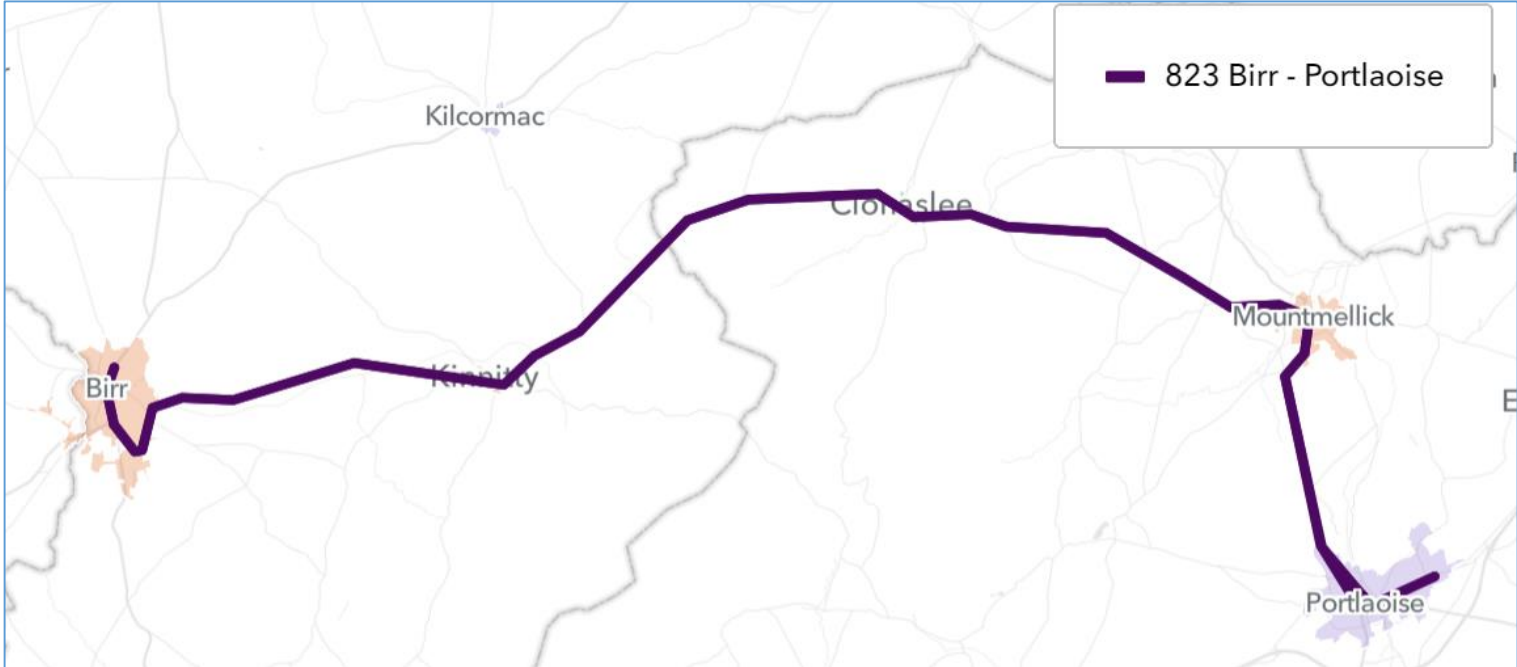
Connecting Ireland - Planning

TFI Local Link Laois Offaly have also now in operation the 823 Birr to Kinnitty since October 2022, which takes in the beautiful Slieve Bloom mountains and the developing bike trails. All the Connecting Ireland services are assessed across many factors taking in:

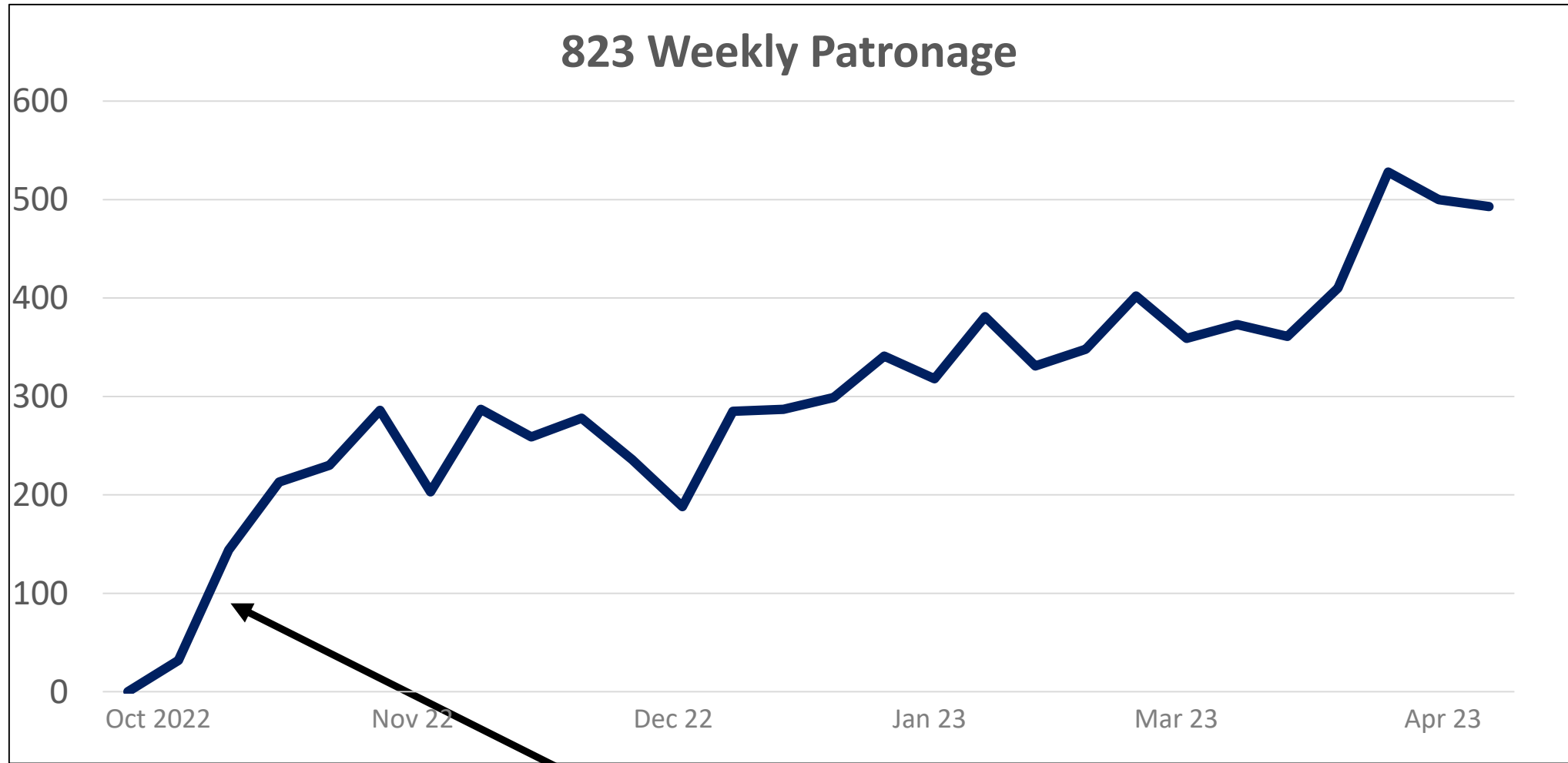
- Social needs
- Employment
- Tourism
- Education
- Health
- Digital hub access for remote workers
- Rail and onward travel connections

| 823 Birr to Portlaoise | | Day: Monday to Sunday | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| BIRR TO PORTLAOISE | | | | | | | | | | |
| Departs | Stops | Monday to Saturday | | | | | Sunday and Bank Holidays | | | |
| Birr | Woodland Villas | 05:45 | 09:45 | 13:30 | 17:15 | 21:10 | 08:00 | 12:10 | 16:15 | 19:40 |
| Birr | Emmet Square | 05:48 | 09:48 | 13:33 | 17:18 | 21:13 | 08:03 | 12:13 | 16:18 | 19:43 |
| Crinkill | Daystart Shop | 05:53 | 09:53 | 13:38 | 17:23 | 21:18 | 08:08 | 12:18 | 16:23 | 19:48 |
| Kinnitty | Post Office | 06:09 | 10:09 | 13:54 | 17:39 | 21:34 | 08:24 | 12:34 | 16:39 | 20:04 |
| Cadamstown | Church | 06:16 | 10:16 | 14:01 | 17:46 | 21:41 | 08:31 | 12:41 | 16:46 | 20:11 |
| Clonaslee | Flynns Londis | 06:28 | 10:28 | 14:13 | 17:58 | 21:53 | 08:43 | 12:53 | 16:58 | 20:23 |
| Rosenallis | Pub | 06:39 | 10:39 | 14:24 | 18:09 | 22:04 | 08:54 | 13:04 | 17:09 | 20:34 |
| Mountmellick | O'Connell Square | 06:48* | 10:48* | 14:33* | 18:18* | 22:13 | 09:03 | 13:13 | 17:18 | 20:43 |
| Portlaoise | Train Station | 07:03* | 11:03* | 14:48* | 18:33* | 22:28 | 09:18 | 13:28 | 17:33 | 20:58 |
| Portlaoise | James Fintan Lalor Ave | 07:06* | 11:06* | 14:51* | 18:36* | 22:31 | 09:21 | 13:31 | 17:36 | 21:01 |
| Portlaoise | Hospital | 07:10* | 11:10* | 14:55* | 18:40* | 22:35 | 09:25 | 13:35 | 17:40 | 21:05 |
| Portlaoise | Kilminchy Avenue | 07:13* | 11:13* | 14:58* | 18:43* | 22:38 | 09:28 | 13:38 | 17:43 | 21:08 |

*Monday to Saturday: Set-down only, no pick-up permitted. Use Slieve Bloom Coaches service 830 for travel between Mountmellick and Portlaoise at these times.

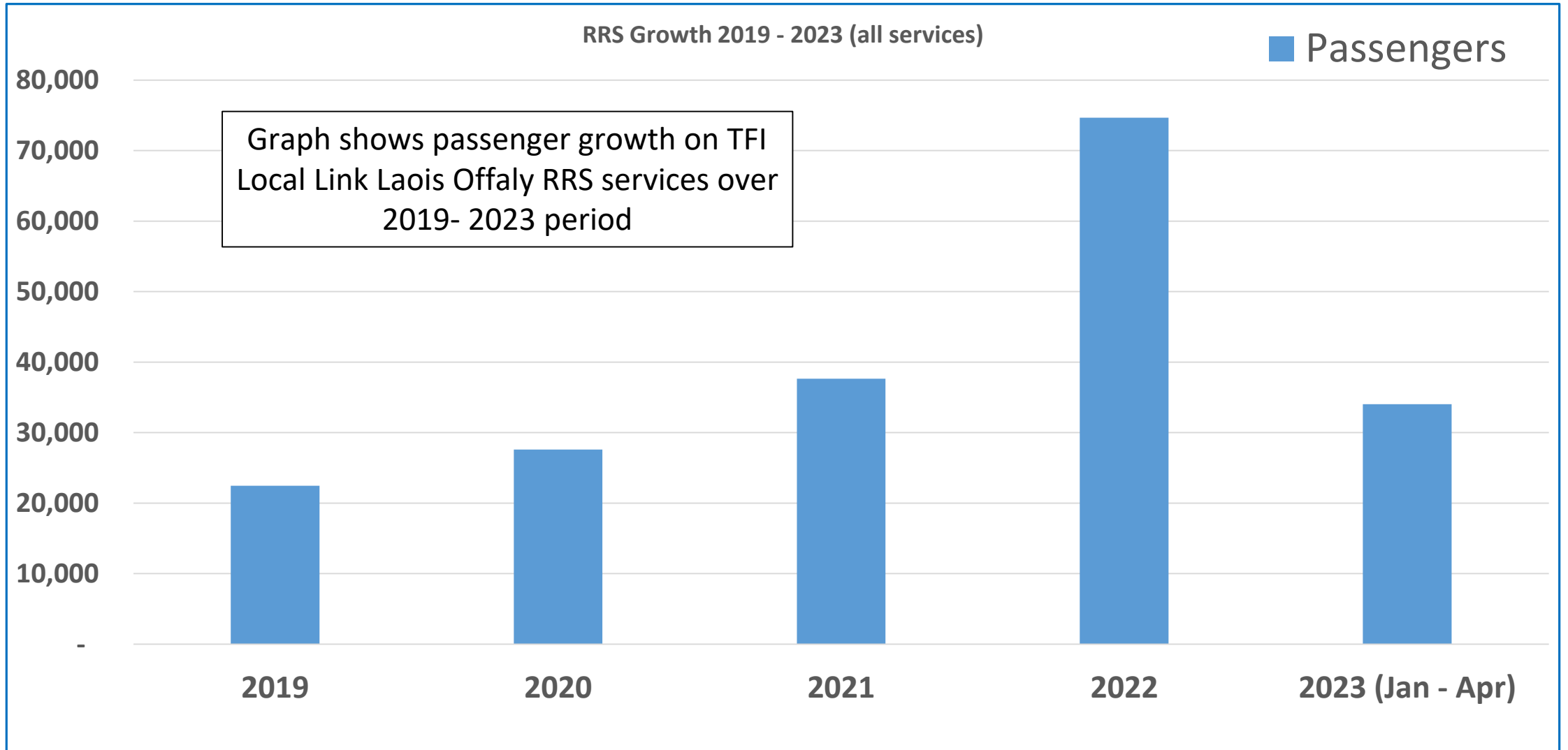


823 (Birr to Portlaoise) Performance



The growth of this service was instant from the start of this new service (Oct 2022)

Regular Bus Service Patronage Growth



Local Link Ticketing

- TFI Local Link Laois Offaly recently expanded its fare payment options to allow passengers to pay for travel with their TFI Leap Card or TFI Go App on RRS services.
- Offering up to a 30% discount on cash fares and 50% for Young Adult and Students, passengers can now use their TFI Leap card to purchase single tickets on Routes 823, 834, 840 and 858.
- Since early 2022, tickets for TFI services became available on the TFI Go App. Since then, the TFI GO app has launched nationally on TFI Local Link services meaning that all regular rural services now accept cashless payments offering passengers a more convenient way to pay and savings of up to 30% on cash fares.



Impacts of new services

The impact locally from the increased bus services is seen with the:

- increased business for local shops and cafes along the routes;
- reduction in private transport with the increasing numbers travelling on TFI Local Link;
- greater access to health facilities and employment opportunities locally;
- connection to onward travel with other bus services or Irish Rail;
- The Connecting Ireland routes all operate 7 days a week and have many frequencies across the day and give more options for rural passengers to use; and
- The housing shortage, especially in student locations has been a barrier in the last number of years for young college students, these routes now give an opportunity to commute locally to nearby colleges and institutes.