

# North Wicklow – Bus Network Amendments - 2022



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# 1. Introduction

In 2020, the National Transport Authority decided to further open up the regional bus market by tendering some services currently provided under the Direct Award contract with Bus Eireann. In 2021, the Authority decided to review the design of the reconfigured Route 133 which is out to tender at the moment to determine its fitness for purpose in meeting the travel needs of the corridor in which it operates. The Authority also wished to augment the network to ensure that connectivity would be enhanced, and that levels of service would be increased throughout the entire corridor, by providing new / enhanced services to support the redesigned Route 133. The Authority is planning for these changes to be implemented in 2022.

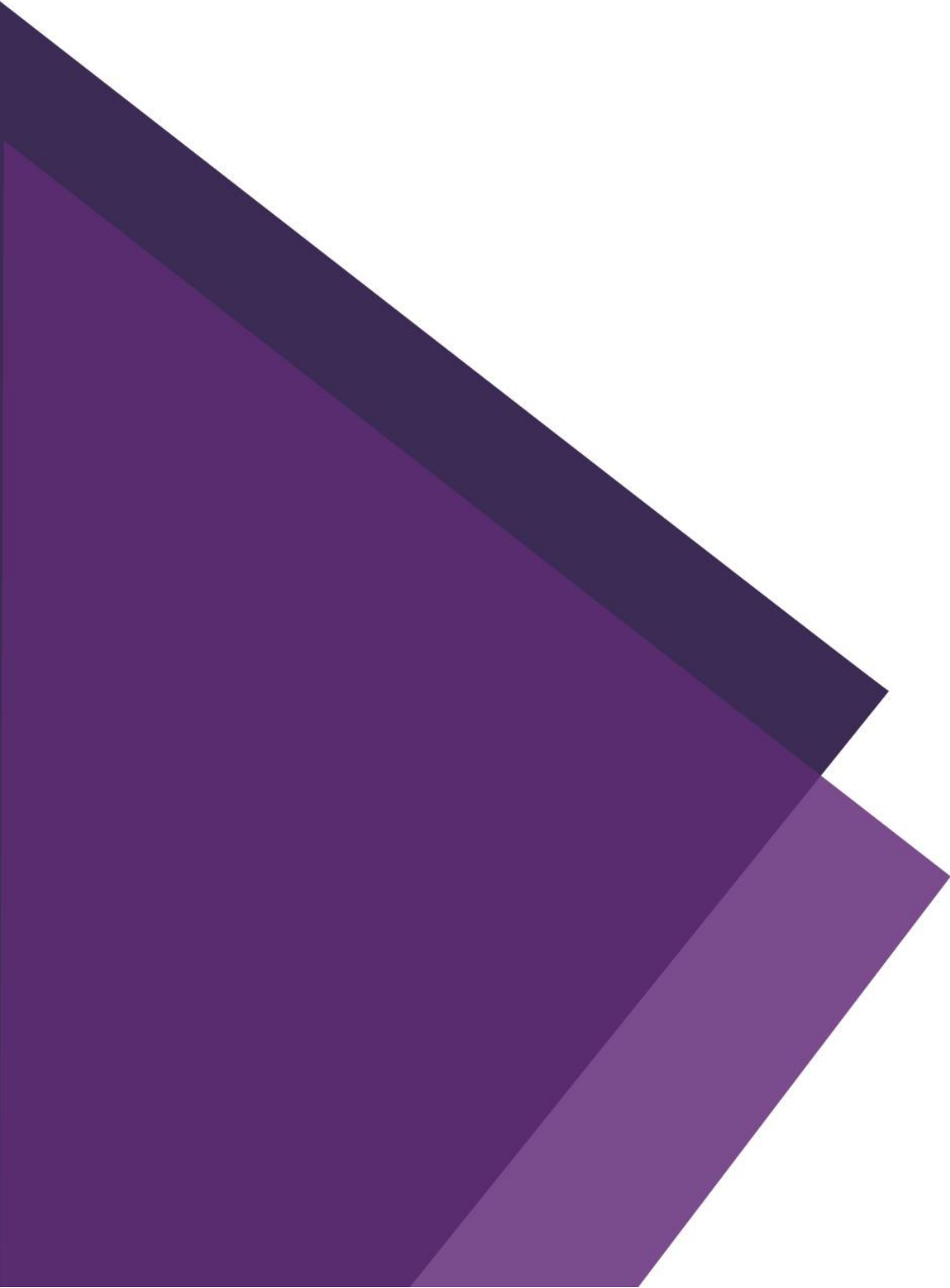
The current 133/133x/133L/133B service patterns are listed below.

- 133( hourly except peak times) - Wicklow – Rathnew – Ashford – NTMK – Bray – Dublin City Centre
- 133 (Peak) - Wicklow – Rathnew – Ashford – NTMK – Dublin City Centre – Dublin Airport
- 133 (Peak) - Wicklow – Rathnew – Ashford – NTMK – Dublin City Centre
- 133B - Wicklow - Rathnew – Ashford – NTMK – Bray
- 133L - Arklow – Rathdrum – Wicklow (2 services per day per direction)
- 133x - Gorey – Arklow - Dublin City Centre
- 133x - Arklow – Dublin City Centre

The main issues with the current bus services in the area are listed as follows:

- The main 133 service operates through north Bray town centre during off peak adding significant delay and reducing passenger experience for passengers not departing from Bray. The service provides set down only on city bound route and pick up only on Wicklow bound routes. At peak times (4-5) hours, the 133 does not operate through Bray. At peak times, Wicklow to Bray is served by a low frequency route (133b).
- The Wicklow – Rathdrum - Arklow 133L route is very low frequency and does not operate at weekends.
- Gorey/ Arklow to Dublin City is currently served by two commercial bus services. The Authority has deemed that there is no PSO requirement to operate these services, as this is adequately served by existing services. The Authority has also deemed that there is no PSO requirement for the Wicklow to Dublin Airport variant, as Wexford Bus operates already between Wicklow Town and Dublin Airport.

## 2. Proposed Network Changes

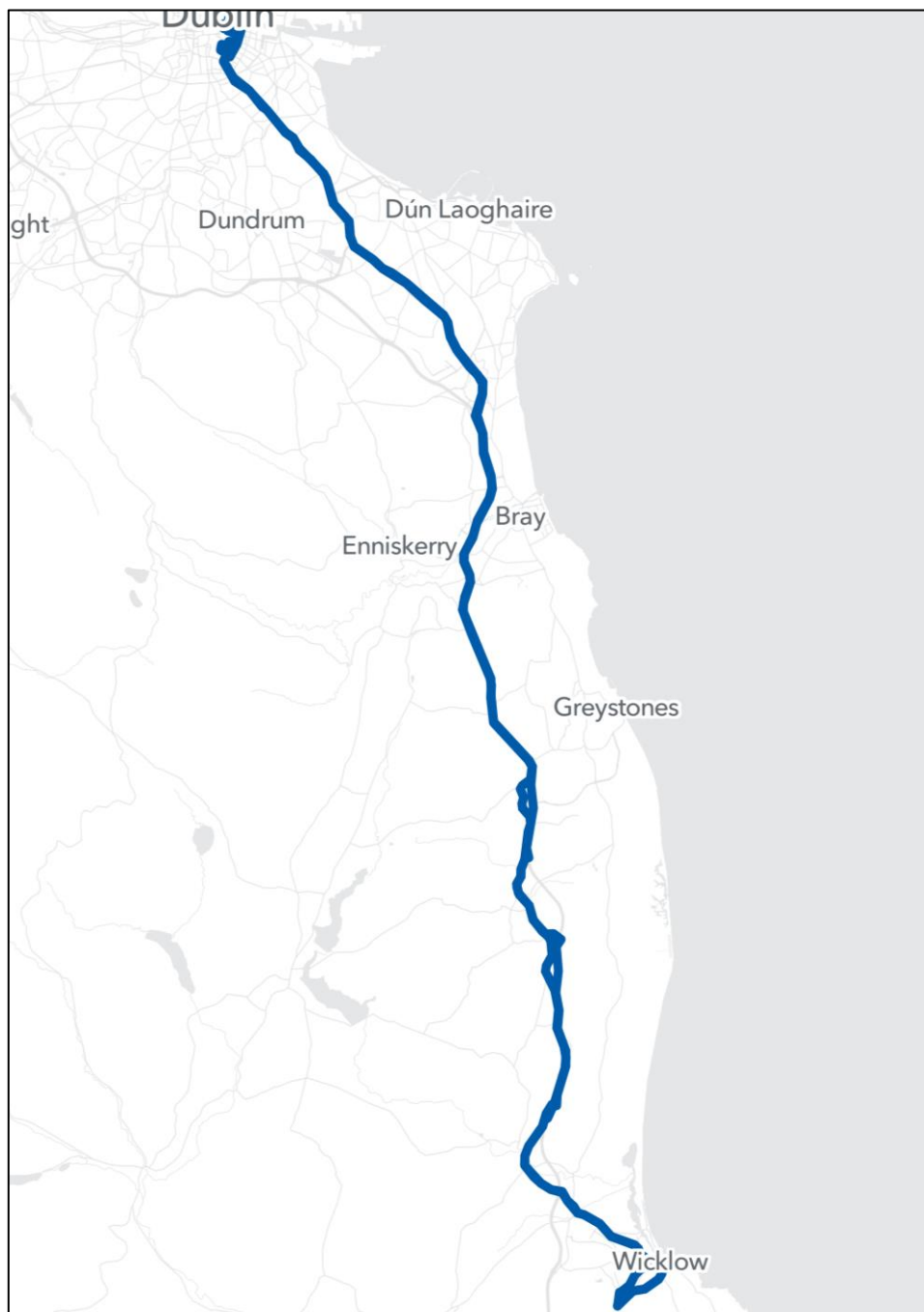


## 2.1 133 Service Changes (Wicklow – Bray - Dublin City)

In relation to the section of 133 bus route that currently operates between Wicklow – Bray - Dublin City Centre, the Authority reviewed a number of options along the current route. The key objective was to improve the attractiveness of the public transport offer along the 133 route alignment between Wicklow, Rathnew, Ashford, Newtownmountkennedy and Dublin City Centre.

The current routing of the 133 service through Bray adds to journey times (minimum 8 minutes) and reduces reliability of the overall service. There is much smaller demand for public transport services from Wicklow to Bray than to Dublin City and environs. The Authority proposes to operate all 133 bus services on the following alignment:

**Figure 1 Map of proposed Wicklow – Bray - Dublin City routing**



**Figure 2 - Map of proposed Wicklow – Bray - Dublin City (Bray environs)**





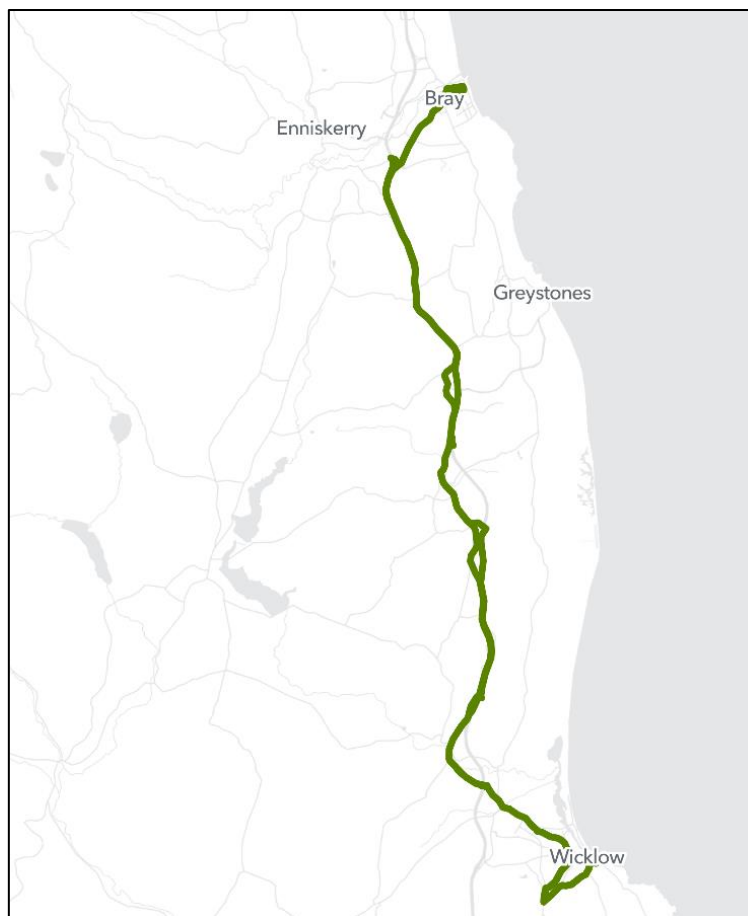
## 2.2 131 Service Proposal (Wicklow – Bray Town Centre)

As a result of the above proposal for the 133 bus to bypass Bray, there is an existing all day connection that will be lost from the current network between Wicklow, Rathnew, Ashford and Bray town centre. There are a number of options that were considered to mitigate this gap. Following a review of the options the Authority decided to replace the existing 133b peak service (Wicklow-Bray) and the 133 service with an all-day service providing hourly connection between Wicklow, Ashford, Rathnew and Bray town centre. This has the following advantages:

- Direct replacement for the existing hourly off-peak service between Wicklow and Bray;
- Marginal impact on existing passengers as times of operation would not change significantly;
- Significant improvement to timetable legibility for passengers along the route;
- Potential to provide an integrated half hourly town bus service in Wicklow, alternating departures to Dublin with those to Bray;
- Provides connection to rail services at Bray Dart station; and
- Ability to be more provided more efficiently as 131 and 133 bus schedules can be interworked, thereby reducing overall costs and support funding required.

This proposal would radically improve the public transport offer along this corridor.

**Figure 3 - Map of proposed Wicklow – Bray 131 route**



### **2.3 Arklow – Wicklow - Naas**

The Authority's Connecting Ireland – Rural Mobility Plan has identified a need for improved public transport connectivity between East and West County Wicklow. Currently, there is no public transport service across the North Wicklow Mountains, so the county's public transport network is effectively split in two, between Blessington/Baltinglass on the western side of the mountains and Bray/Wicklow/Arklow along the east coast. Travelling between Blessington and Wicklow Town requires a long diversion either to the north via Dublin City Centre or to the south via Tullow in County Carlow.

Bus Éireann is currently contracted by the Authority to operate route 133L from Arklow via Avoca and Rathdrum to Wicklow. As part of the tendering of the Wicklow to Dublin commuter corridor planned for 2022, the Authority has decided to remove route 133L from the upcoming contract, and that services will be secured through the offices of Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow. As Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow already procuring on behalf of the Authority route 183 between Glendalough and Wicklow, this presents an opportunity for routes 133L and 183 to be merged into a single route, and for their resources to be pooled.

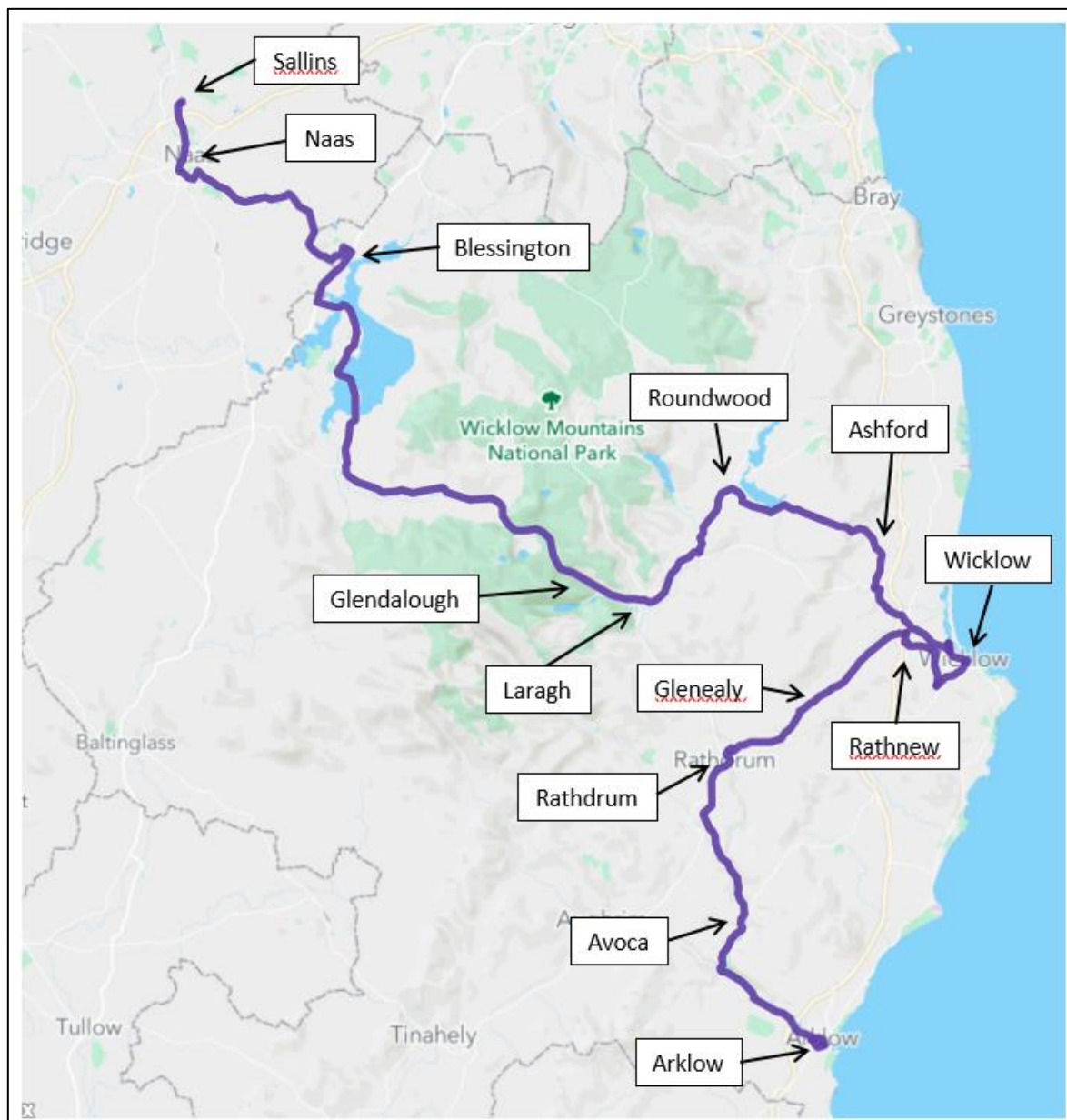
The Service Planning Section is proposing that routes 133L and 183 be merged into a single route and extended across the Wicklow Mountains to Blessington, Naas and Sallins, to provide a continuous route from Sallins via Naas, Blessington, Glendalough, Roundwood, Wicklow and Rathdrum to Arklow (see map below). This proposed route addresses the needs identified in Connecting Ireland and could be achieved with no increase in peak vehicle requirement over and above what is required today on the individual routes.

The proposed timetable (2 PVR) would be designed to complement the existing public transport offer by providing the following:

- a Monday to Sunday service, serving intermediate settlements en route;
- improved accessibility for people with mobility impairments;
- improved connections to other public transport routes and services in Sallins, Naas, Blessington, Ashford, Wicklow and Arklow; and
- Integrated with recently introduced services between Ballymore-Eustace – Blessington – Naas on Route 884.

The timetable will be designed to maximise the efficiency of the resource utilisation while providing an appropriate level of service and timings along the corridor.

Figure 3 - Map of proposed Arklow - Wicklow – Naas Route



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