

## Cuts in direct bus links to Dublin are criticised



Rural organisations have criticised the Expressway route cuts announced by Bus Éireann.

### **Bus Éireann accused of abandoning rural Ireland**

In the wake of the news that Carrick-on-Suir has lost its direct bus link to Dublin, which led to a protest at the Waterford terminus on February 14th, Bus Éireann has announced further cuts in services linking the region to the capital.

A total of 93 services are to be cut due to low passenger numbers, according to the operator, but that has cut no mustard with ICMSA President John Comer.

“Resentment is building rapidly in rural areas at what he called the relentless and intensive stripping-out of services that had taken several decades to put in place,” he said.

“It’s deeply ironic to hear so much concern and official commentary about the need for ‘connectivity’ and the supreme importance of retaining State control of access to and from Ireland while at the same time as a state transport agency simply announces – without a word of consultation or warning – that it is ending bus links to Dublin from several rural towns where that bus service was the only public transport option.

“It’s as if the State simply turns around to a whole community and announces ‘there you go now lads, you’re on your own from here onwards’. People feel abandoned. The need for ‘connectivity’ doesn’t end at city boundaries.”

The IFA was similarly trenchant in its criticism, which will, among other services, lead to the removal of the Route 5 (Dublin-New Ross-Waterford) service while its Route 4 service is to be extended to New Ross.

IFA Deputy President and Countryside spokesman Tim O’Leary has called on Rural Affairs Minister and Kilkenny TD Ann Phelan to intervene and ensure Bus Éireann plans to reduce bus stops in rural areas will not impact negatively on affected communities.

“Minister Ann Phelan’s commitment to ‘rural proof’ all actions by State bodies and government departments is vital to ensure that critical services such as transport are maintained in rural Ireland.”

Bus Éireann's proposals will effectively leave many rural towns and villages left without an adequate public transport service.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, Bus Eireann spokesman Martin Nolan said the operator is losing thousands of Euro on several routes.

"We are reluctant to come out of anywhere but the services cannot stay on the road if we do not make money," he said.

"Bus Eireann is following the market, we will have a number of towns and villages affected. We have two options - close the route, or conduct surgery."

Mr Nolan added: "When that is forced upon us, what happens to the towns which are left behind? If the market is favouring the bigger towns and cities, the bit in the middle is going to be expensive [to service]. It's a difficulty for a State company to come out of towns and villages, but it's a question of survival."