

Shuttle Bus Service North & West Clare

Environment



Overview

North and West Clare — encompassing the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher — is one of Ireland’s most distinctive and ecologically rich landscapes. Its limestone pavements, rare wildflowers, and dramatic Atlantic coastline attract large numbers of visitors each year. However, this popularity brings challenges. During peak season, narrow rural roads experience heavy congestion, and informal roadside parking can damage sensitive vegetation and create safety risks for drivers, walkers, and cyclists. As visitor numbers continue to rise, these pressures highlight the need for more sustainable and coordinated approaches to managing access to the region.

In response to these challenges, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Burren National Park and Clare County Council partnered to introduce a free pilot hop-on hop-off shuttle bus service for the 2025 summer season. The service connected key towns, villages, and visitor attractions across North and West Clare, supported by dedicated free parking areas to encourage visitors to leave cars behind. This initiative represented a significant step toward improving traffic flow, reducing environmental impact, enhancing visitor safety, and supporting a more sustainable tourism experience. It also serves as a pilot for developing longer-term, region-wide visitor management solutions that protect North and West Clare’s unique natural heritage. Modifications have been made to routes during the pilot after extensive consultation with local community stakeholders,

Objective

To provide a more sustainable and environmentally responsible model for accessing the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher by introducing a shuttle service that reduces private car use, protects sensitive habitats, and enhances biodiversity outcomes, while also offering convenient, accessible transport alternatives for both visitors and local communities.



Location:
Clare



Project Lead:
Clare County Council

Tags: Sustainability,
Environment, tourism,
communications, collaboration



Opportunities

The shuttle service delivered clear benefits for the region:

- **Reduced Congestion & Safer Roads:** Fewer cars during peak season eased pressure on narrow routes.
- **Better Visitor Experience:** Visitors avoided parking stress and challenging road conditions.
- **Environmental Gains:** Lower emissions and reduced verge damage around busy access points.
- **Economic Boost:** Parking in smaller towns encouraged visitors to spend locally.
- **Improved Accessibility:** The service made the area easier to reach for those without cars, younger visitors, and older adults.

Challenges

- **Funding:** Securing adequate financial resources to launch a new seasonal transport initiative posed an initial hurdle.
- **Stakeholder Management:** The project involved multiple stakeholders – including local communities, agencies and tourism operators – requiring coordination, alignment and clear communication.
- **Timeframe and Deadlines:** The service needed to be developed and implemented within a tight timeframe to be operational for the 2025 summer season.

Solutions

- **Funding:** A joint funding approach between Clare County Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), supported by government resources, enabled the project to move forward.
- **Stakeholder Management:** Public consultation events were held to gather input, build support and ensure the service met community and visitor needs.
- **Timeframe and Deadlines:** A highly collaborative working approach – combined with phased tasks and short, focused deadlines – helped maintain momentum and deliver the service on schedule.

Actions to support environmental sustainability

By encouraging visitors to park in designated areas and travel onward by bus, the initiative significantly reduced the number of private cars on narrow rural roads. This decrease in traffic helped lower carbon emissions during the busiest months of the season, contributing to improved air quality and a lighter environmental footprint. Fewer vehicles also meant less pressure on roadside verges, where informal parking had previously caused erosion and damage to sensitive vegetation. By providing a dependable, low-impact travel alternative, the service not only protected fragile habitats but also encouraged more sustainable visitor behaviour throughout the area.

Burren & Cliffs Explorer

free hop on... hop off... shuttle bus

Explore North and West Clare with Ease!
Running from May 1st to 31st August.
For locals and tourists!

ROUTES:
Miltown Malbay – Lahinch – Liscannor – Cliffs of Moher Experience
Doolin – Cliffs of Moher Experience
Kilfenora – Lisdoonvarna – Cliffs of Moher Experience
Ballyvaughan – Kilfenora
Kilfenora – Corofin - Carran
Corofin – Burren National Park

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