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KILLALOE-BALLINA BRIDGE

TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT

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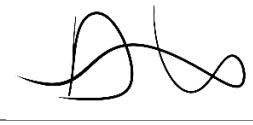
Dan Loveless BA (Hons) MSc Graduate Transport Planner		09 October 2025
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Executive Summary

This Transport Assessment (TA) has been prepared by Curtins on behalf of Clare County Council (CCC) in relation to the operation of the Killaloe–Ballina Bridge and the introduction of the new Killaloe Bypass and Brian Boru Bridge. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate changes in traffic volumes, journey times, vehicle speeds, and pedestrian activity following the staged opening of the new bridge and the subsequent trial pedestrianisation of the old Killaloe–Ballina Bridge.

The assessment considers three distinct operational scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Before the opening of the new Brian Boru Bridge (pre–22 May 2025)
- Scenario 2: Both the Brian Boru Bridge and old Killaloe–Ballina Bridge open to vehicular traffic (22 May – 27 July 2025)
- Scenario 3: Only the Brian Boru Bridge open to vehicular traffic, with the old bridge pedestrianised (from 28 July 2025 onwards)

Key Findings

- Traffic Volumes: Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) data show that vehicular traffic has successfully transferred to the new Brian Boru Bridge. Under Scenario 3, weekday and weekend volumes on the new bridge exceeded those previously recorded on the old bridge, demonstrating that the bypass is effectively accommodating existing and additional traffic demand.
  Notably, vehicle entries and exits along the **R463 corridor decreased by 800–1,000 vehicles per day**, indicating a major reduction in through-traffic within Killaloe town centre.

- Speed Analysis: 85th percentile speeds remained largely unchanged or slightly increased across the surveyed network. This indicates that despite changes in traffic routing, the local highway network continues to operate efficiently and safely.

- Journey Times: Routes using the new bridge are longer (approximately 5.3 km compared to 2.2 km using the old bridge); however, higher average speeds (circa 50 km/h versus 30 km/h) demonstrate improved travel efficiency and reduced congestion.

- Pedestrian Movements: Pedestrian counts on the old bridge increased by approximately 145% following pedestrianisation, confirming the success of the intervention in encouraging sustainable travel and improving connectivity between Killaloe and Ballina. This highlights a strong and sustained shift toward walking and cycling, demonstrating a latent demand for active travel connectivity across the River Shannon.

- The pedestrian bridge now serves as a safe, accessible, and attractive route for residents and visitors alike.

- Network Performance: The redistribution of traffic has not resulted in any adverse impacts on journey reliability or local congestion. The surrounding road network remains well-balanced and capable of accommodating the new traffic patterns.

- Seasonal and Temporal Trends: Analysis identified clear seasonal travel patterns—weekday traffic was higher during school term times, while weekend volumes peaked during holiday periods. This reflects the dual role of the Killaloe–Ballina corridor as both a commuter route and a tourist destination.

Overall Conclusion

The introduction of the Brian Boru Bridge and the pedestrianisation of the old Killaloe–Ballina Bridge have achieved the intended transport and sustainability objectives outlined in the Killaloe–Ballina Town Enhancement and Mobility Plan (TEMP).

Traffic has been redistributed effectively, network performance remains stable, and pedestrian movements have substantially increased. The trial pedestrianisation has also delivered clear community and environmental benefits, reducing congestion within the town centres and improving the attractiveness of the area for residents, visitors, and sustainable travel.

Based on the evidence, Curtins conclude that the trial pedestrianisation has demonstrated strong potential for permanent adoption as part of the broader strategy to enhance sustainable travel and the public realm within both towns.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Transport Assessment (TA) has been prepared by Curtins on behalf of Clare County Council (CCC) in relation to a trial pedestrianisation of the old Killaloe Bridge since the new Killaloe by-pass has opened.

1.1.2 The main purpose of this report is to identify changes in traffic flow, journey times, speed and pedestrian flows throughout the three scenarios.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Curtins were involved and supported the Killaloe-Ballina Town Enhancement and Mobility Plan (TEMP) issued in January 2022. The premise of the plan was to review opportunities for the towns once the new Killaloe by-pass was operational and significant improvements to traffic flows were made. This included reviewing existing traffic data and multi-modal connectivity within both towns. This data was used to develop the proposed mobility plan for both towns to promote initiatives which support sustainable travel. One of the suggestions was to pedestrianise the existing/old Killaloe/Ballina bridge.

1.2.2 The new Killaloe by-pass bridge, the Brian Boru Bridge, opened on the 22nd May 2025.

1.2.3 Since the TEMP was published, a trial to pedestrianise the old bridge has been conducted. The closure for vehicles has been in place from 28th July 2025. It was possible to use both bridges from the 22nd May 2025 till the trail began on 28th July 2025.

1.2.4 A range of traffic data has been collected across the various stages of operation of both bridges.

1.3 Site Location

1.3.1 Killaloe is a small town on the western side of the River Shannon in County Clare. Ballina is a similar sized town on the eastern side of the River Shannon within County Tipperary. Both are connected by a bridge in the middle of the towns.

1.3.2 In May 2025 the new Killaloe by-pass opened with a new bridge connecting County Clare and County Tipperary to the south of the two towns.

1.3.3 The two towns and the bridges are presented in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1: Site Location

1.4 Report Structure

1.4.1 Following this introduction, the remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2: Data Inventory:** this summarises the data collected.
- **Section 3: Assessment Scenarios:** this section explains the three assessment scenarios.
- **Section 4: Traffic Data and Distribution:** this section presents the ATC data per scenario.

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- **Section 5: Speed Analysis** presents the speed data observed from the ATCs.
- **Section 6: Journey Time Analysis** this section presents the journey time data collected and identifies trends.
- **Section 7: Pedestrian Analysis** this section presents the pedestrian data collected at Killaloe Bridge and identifies trends.
- **Section 8: Summary & Conclusion** summarises the content of the TA and offers conclusions.

2.0 Data Inventory

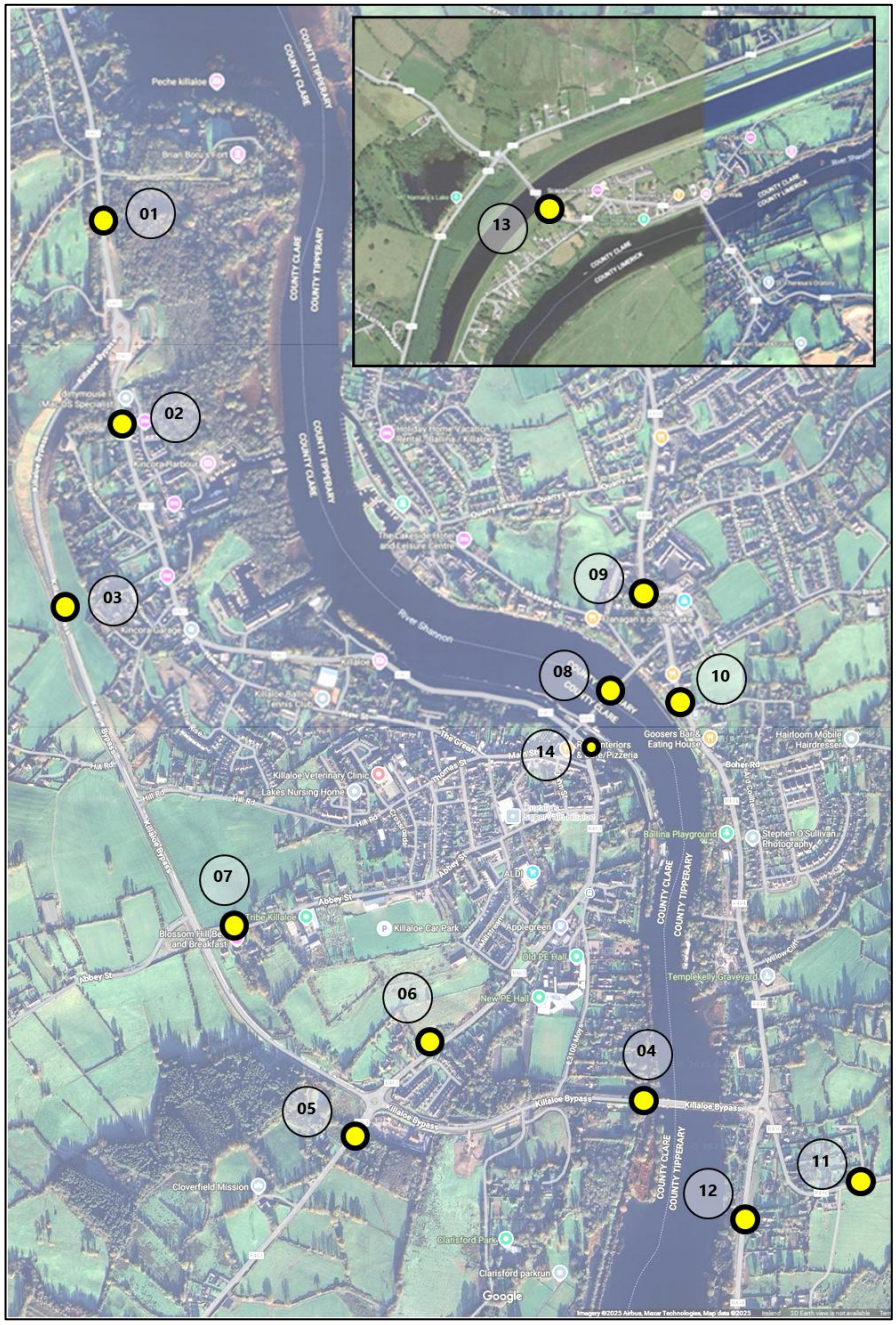
2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section of the report summarises the traffic and transport data collected within the study area.

2.2 ATC Data

2.2.1 Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) data was collected at 14 locations within the study area. These locations are presented in **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2:1: ATC Survey Locations



- Scenario 1: Before the Brian Boru Bridge opened
  - w/c Friday 2nd May 2025
  - w/c Friday 9th May 2025
  - w/c Friday 16th May

- Scenario 2: Both Brian Boru Bridge and Old Killaloe-Ballina Bridge operational
  - w/c Friday 23rd May 2025
  - w/c Friday 30th May 2025
  - w/c Friday 6th June 2025
  - w/c Friday 13th June 2025
  - w/c Monday 21st July 2025 – includes tourist traffic

- Scenario 3: Only Brian Boru Bridge open to traffic
  - w/c Monday 28th July 2025 - includes tourist traffic
  - w/c Friday 16th August 2025 – includes tourist traffic
  - w/c Monday 1st September 2025 – includes school traffic
  - w/c Monday 8th September 2025 – includes school traffic

2.3 Pedestrian Counts

2.3.1 Pedestrian counts were completed on the old bridge on the following dates:

- Scenario1: Before the Brian Boru Bridge opened
  - 19th November 2024

- Scenario 2: Both Brian Boru Bridge and Old Killaloe-Ballina Bridge operational
  - 27th, 28th & 29th May 2025

- Scenario 3: Only Brian Boru Bridge open to traffic
  - 24th to 28th August 2025 – includes tourist trips
  - 5th to 18th September 2025 – includes school trips

2.4 Journey Time Surveys

2.4.1 In addition, journey time surveys were completed on following dates:

- Scenario 1: Before the Brian Boru Bridge opened
  - No data
- Scenario 2: Both Brian Boru Bridge and Old Killaloe-Ballina Bridge operational
  - 29th May 2025

- Scenario 3: Only Brian Boru Bridge open to traffic
  - 18th September 2025 – includes school traffic

2.5 Quality Assurance

2.5.1 The survey data was collected by Traffinomics Limited and subject to their internal quality assurance process. The data was further checked and reviewed by Curtins.

3.0 Assessment Scenarios

3.1.1 For the purpose of this report the data has been split into three scenarios for ease of analysis, which are as follows:

- Scenario 1: Before the Brian Boru Bridge opened (before 22nd May 2025)
- Scenario 2: Both Brian Boru Bridge and Old Killaloe-Ballina Bridge operational (22nd May – 27th July 2025)
- Scenario 3: Only Brian Boru Bridge open to traffic (28th July 2025 – present)

4.0 Traffic Data and Distribution

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section of the report presents the ATC data and how this changes across the three scenarios.

4.1.2 Each scenario has had weekdays and weekend traffic counts assessed separately to account for the changes in traffic behaviour at these times. Scenario 1 has been used as a baseline for the traffic counts in scenarios 2 and 3 to be measured against as a percentage change.

4.2 Scenario 1

4.2.1 The average daily vehicle count for Scenario 1 at weekdays and weekends is shown in **Figure 4.1** and **Figure 4.2** respectively.

4.2.2 In general, vehicle counts were higher on weekdays than weekends, with Sites 1 and 2 the only locations where this was not the case. A weekday average of 4,309 vehicles crossed the old bridge at site 8, with 3,766 vehicles crossing on weekends.

4.2.3 Site 4 at the new bridge was not measured in this scenario, with the new bridge not yet opened. Site 14 next to the old bridge was also not measured until scenario 3, when the bridge closed.

Figure 4.1: Scenario 1 Weekday Vehicle Average

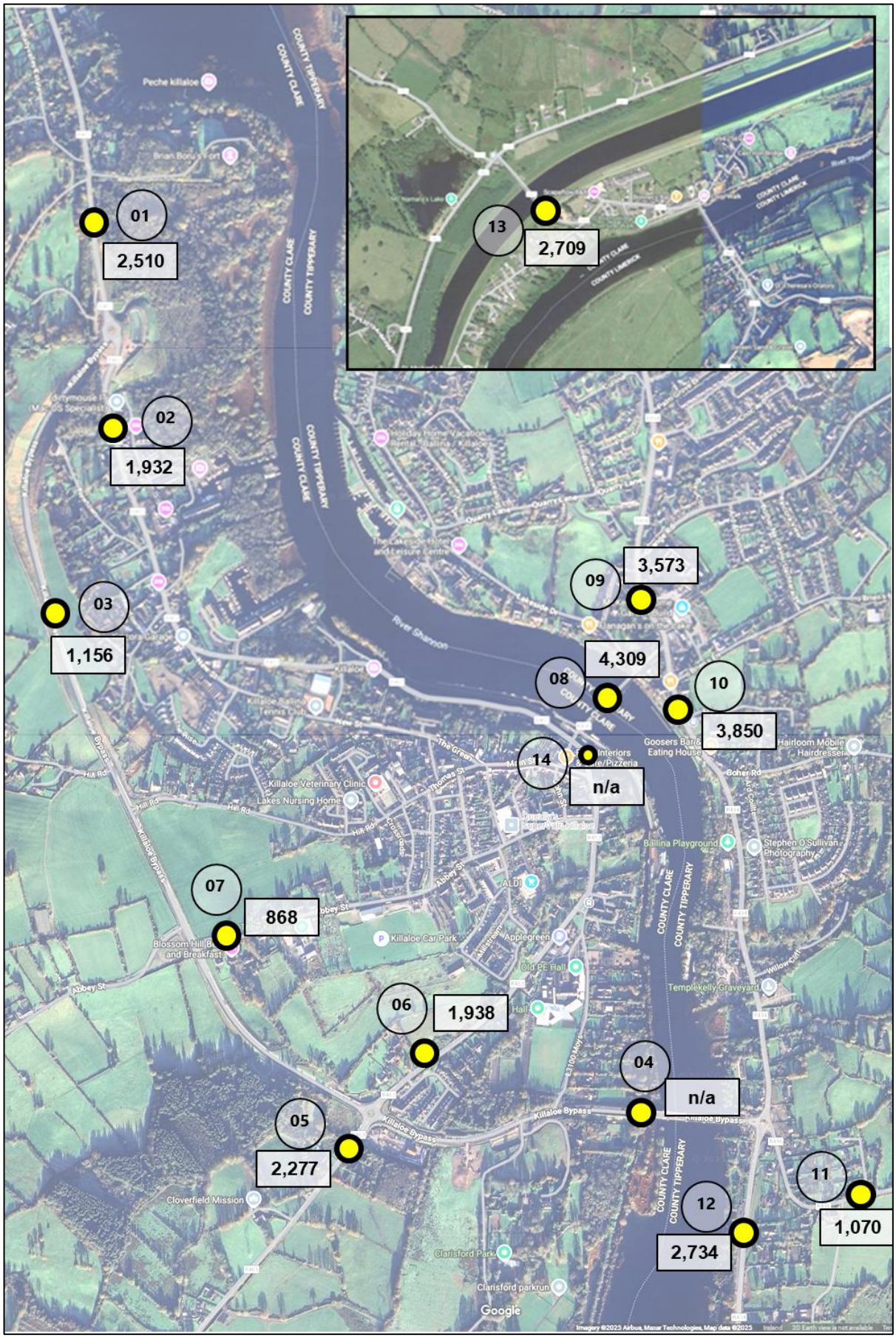
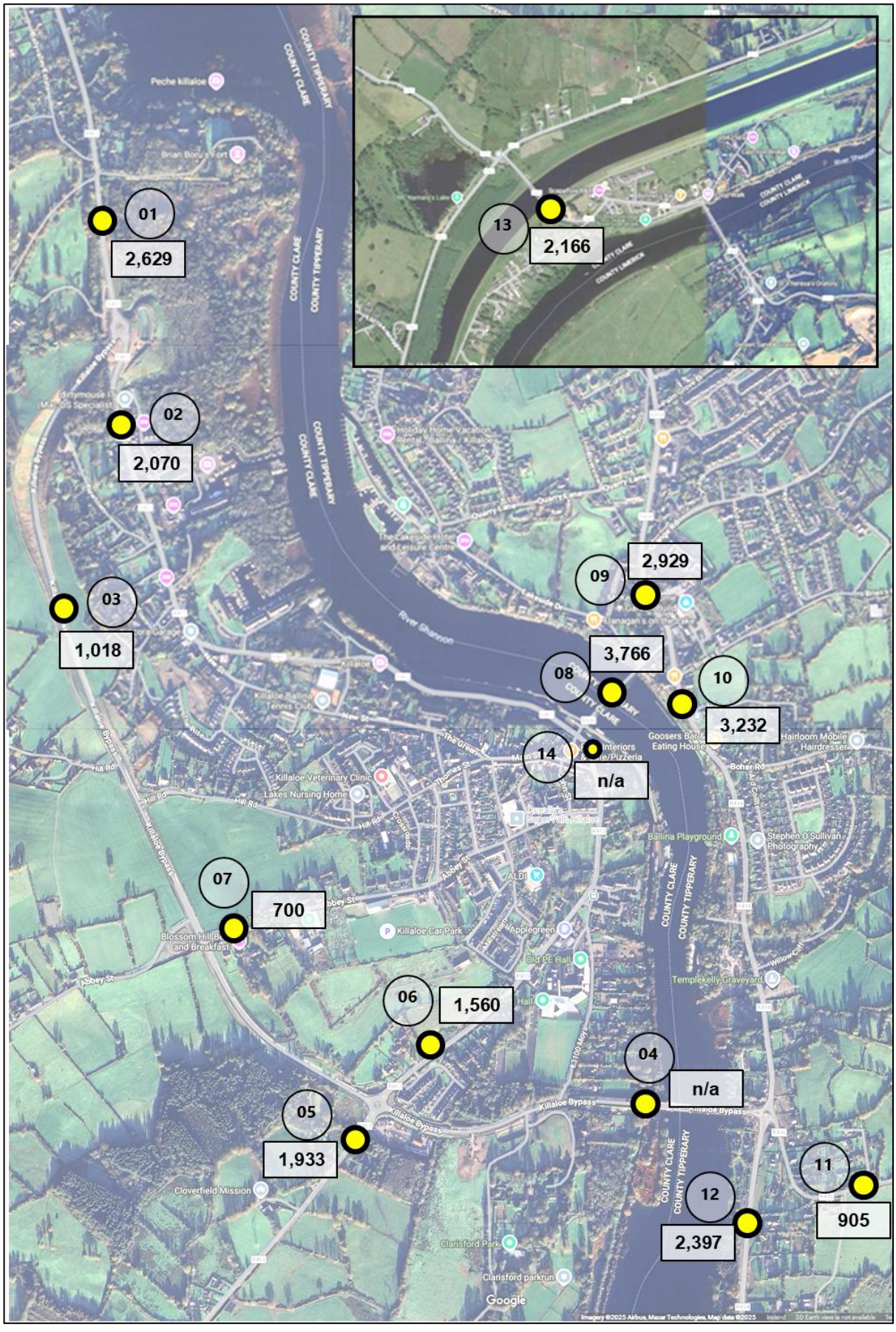


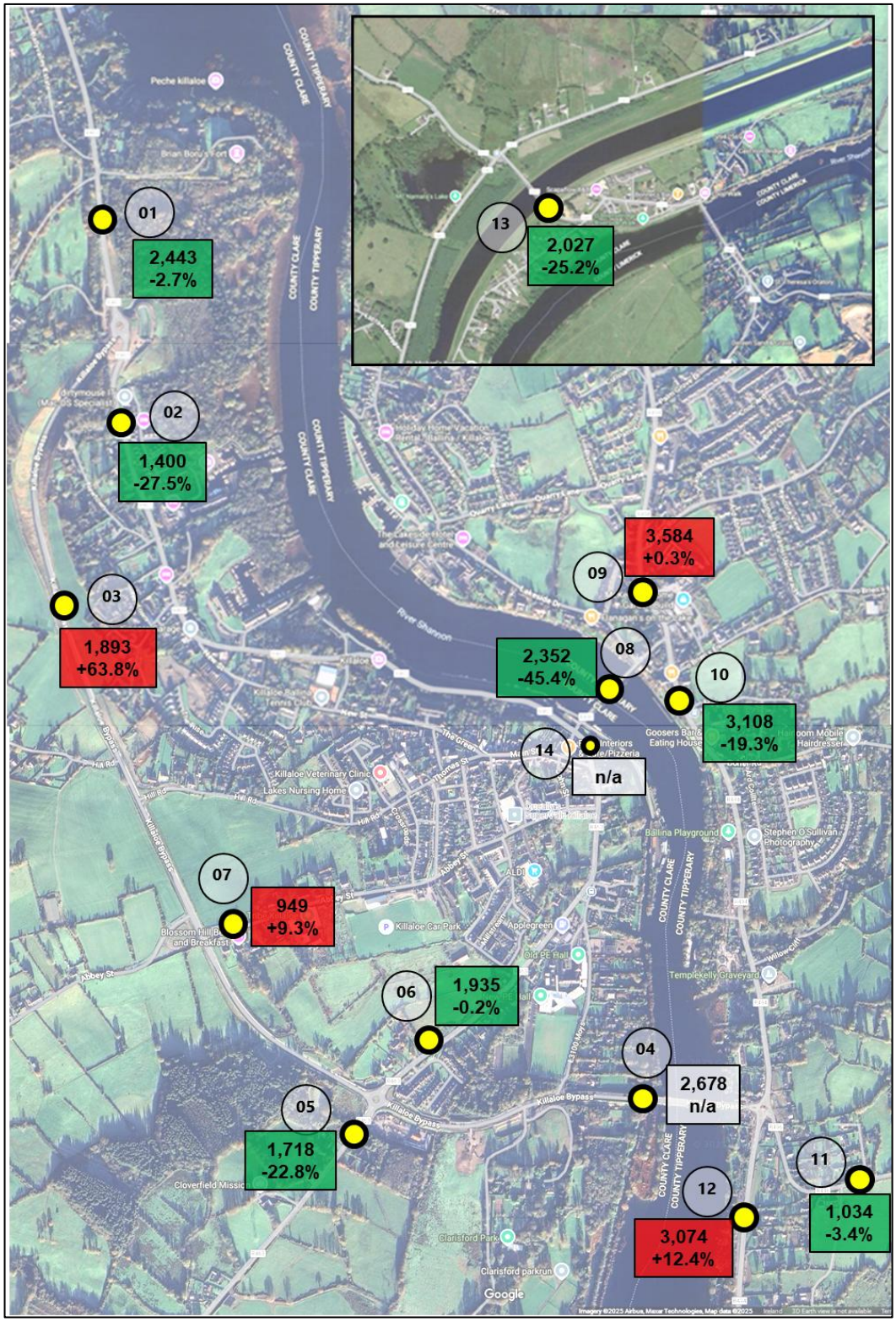
Figure 4.2: Scenario 1 Weekend Vehicle Average



4.3 Scenario 2

4.3.1 The average daily vehicle count for Scenario 2 at weekdays is shown in **Figure 4.3**. The percentage variation compared to Scenario 1 is presented. Red boxes indicate an increase in traffic and green indicates a decrease in traffic.

Figure 4.3: Scenario 2 Weekday Vehicle Average



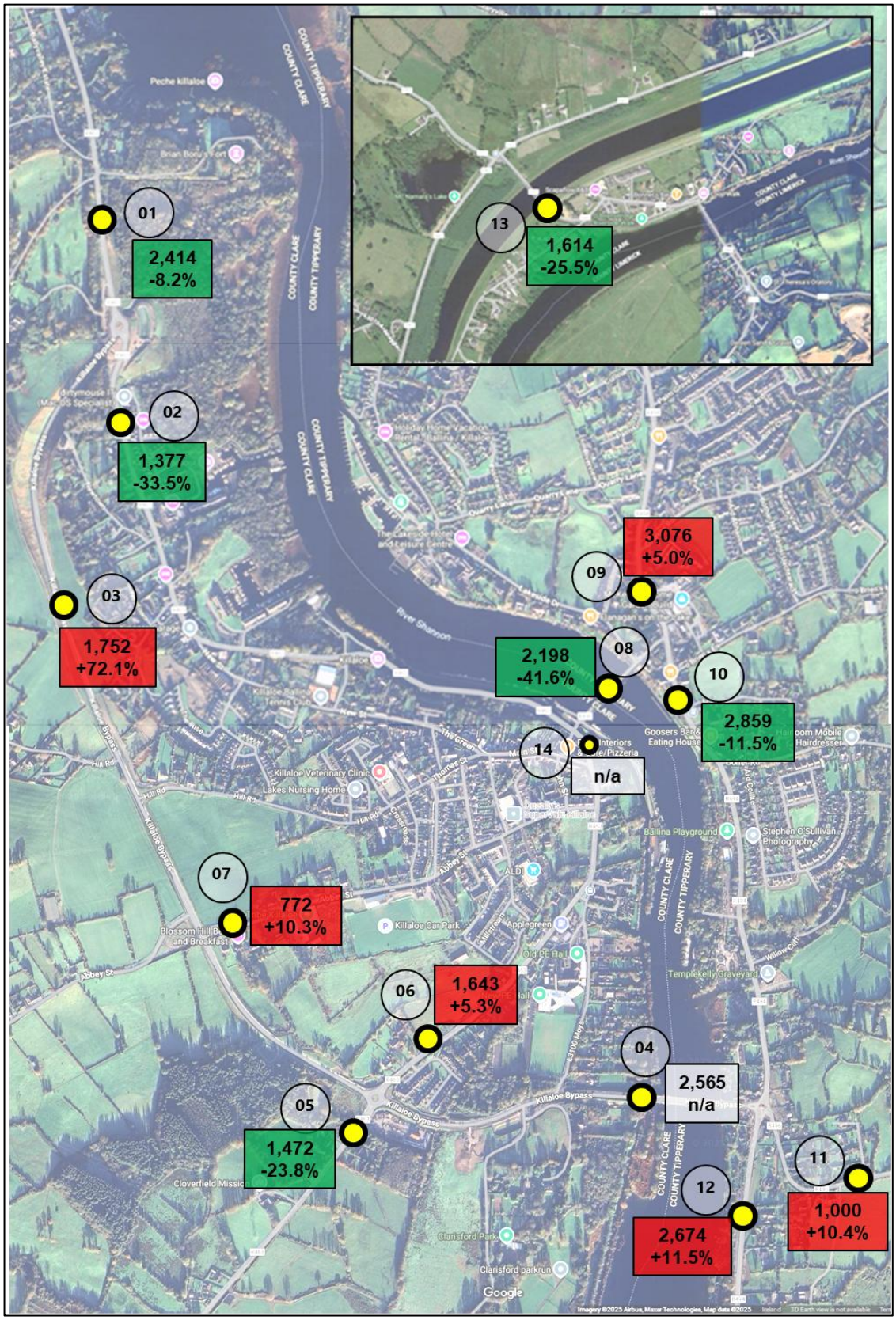
4.3.2 The data shows that there was an increase of 64% in vehicles at Site 3, coupled with decreases at sites at which vehicles would travel to access the old bridge, such as Site 2, 8 and 10. This suggests that many vehicles moved to using the new bridge even when the old bridge was still operational. This is shown by 2,678 vehicles being captured at Site 4 next to the Brian Boru bridge.

4.3.3 There was also a 25% decrease in vehicles at Site 13. This suggests that many vehicles that previously used the Site 13 crossing switched to the new bridge.

4.3.4 The average daily vehicle count for Scenario 2 at weekends is shown in **Figure 4.4**.

4.3.5 The figures reflect similar trends to the weekday figures. In addition to the changes already noted, there were increases at Sites 11 and 12 near the new bridge, which could be a result of more vehicles routing through the new bridge rather than the old bridge.

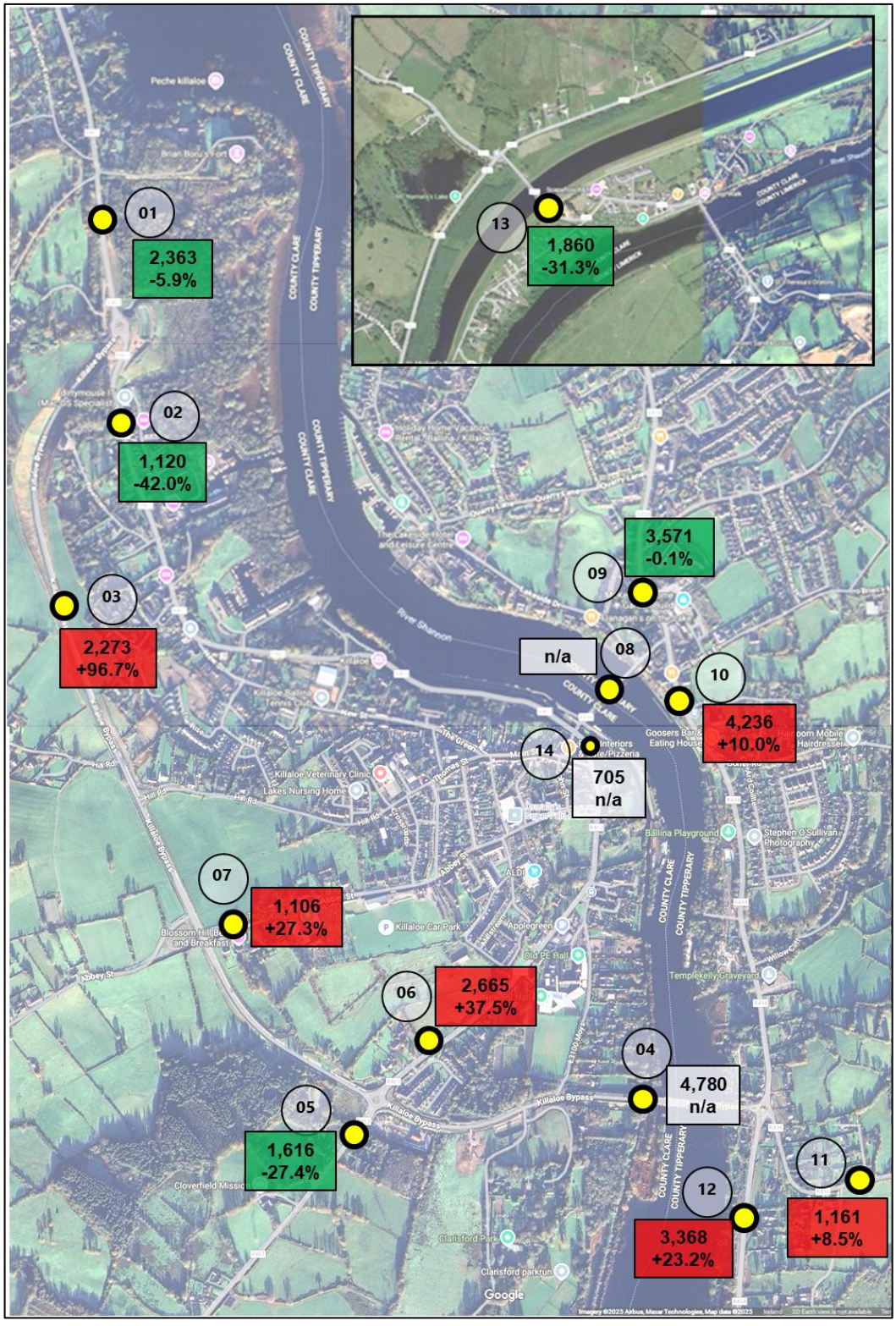
Figure 4.4: Scenario 2 Weekend Vehicle Average



4.4 Scenario 3

4.4.1 The average daily vehicle count for Scenario 3 on weekdays is shown in **Figure 4.5**. The percentage variation compared to Scenario 1 is presented. Red boxes indicate an increase in traffic and green indicates a decrease in traffic.

Figure 4.5: Scenario 3 Weekday Vehicle Average



4.4.2 The data shows an even greater shift of vehicles towards Site 3 (+97%), and also large increases at Sites 6 and 7 (+38% and +27% respectively). This could be due to vehicles being rerouted from the now closed old bridge. An average of 705 vehicles crossed site 14, which is likely to be a point where they were rerouted towards the new bridge.

4.4.3 An average of 4,780 vehicles per day crossed site 4, the new Brian Boru bridge. This is a 78% increase from the scenario 2 weekday average, showing the impact of closing the old bridge. The volume of traffic using the new Brian Boru bridge is higher than the average weekday vehicular trips using the old bridge in Scenario 1 (4,309 two-way vehicles).

4.4.4 The average daily vehicle count for Scenario 3 at weekends is shown in **Figure 4.6**.

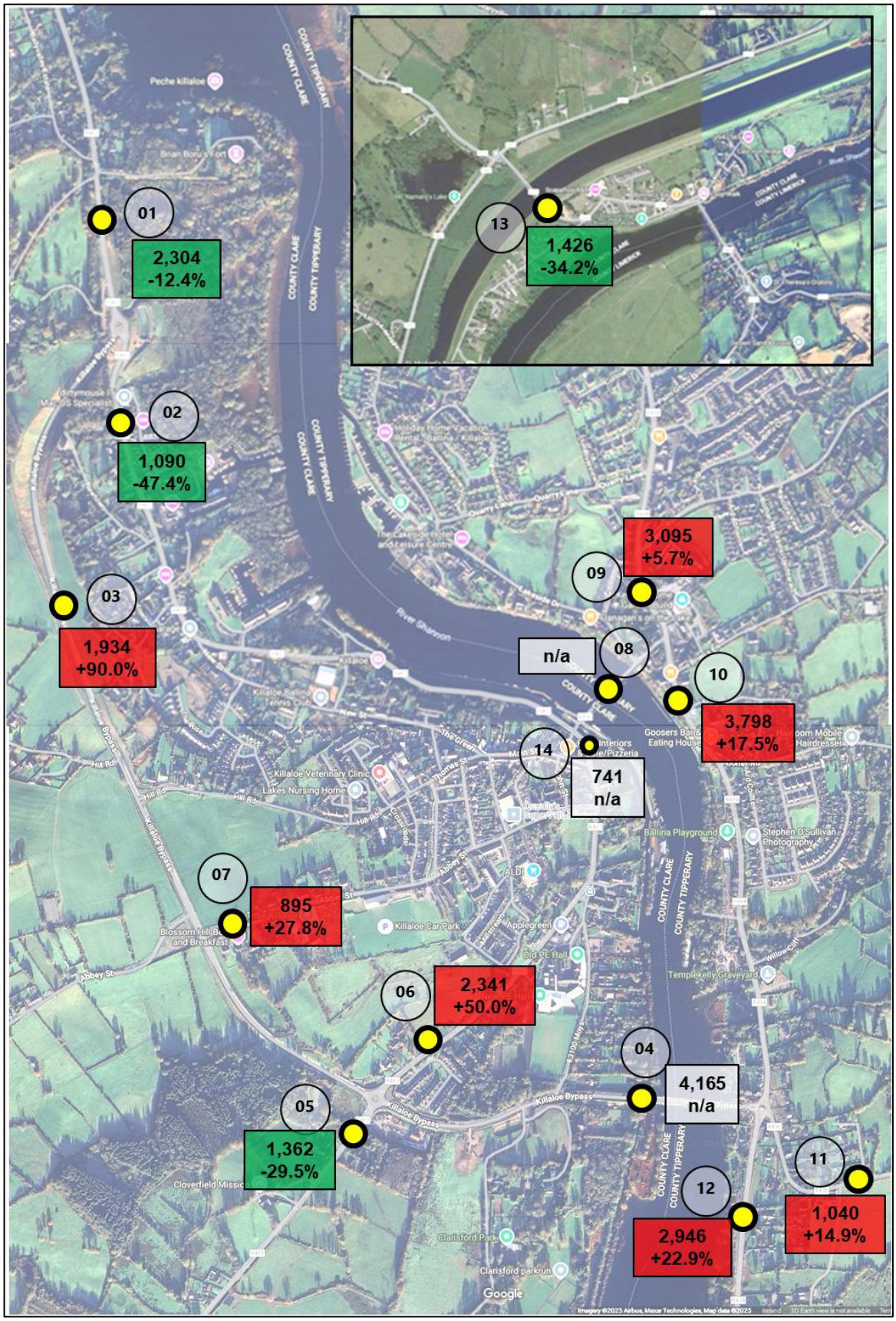
4.4.5 In general, the weekend trends are similar to the weekday. Traffic volumes were generally lower on weekends.

4.4.6 An average of 4,165 vehicles per day crossed Site 4, the new Brian Boru bridge. The volume of traffic using the new Brian Boru bridge is higher than the average weekend vehicular trips using the old bridge in Scenario 1 (3,766 two-way vehicles).

4.4.7 Traffic has reduced at Site 2, the R463 in both the weekday and weekend averages when compared to Scenario 1. This indicates a reduction of circa 800-1,000 vehicles are entering/leaving Killaloe town area per day due to the new bridge. This indicates a significant relief of through-traffic within the town core, reducing congestion and improving safety and air quality.

4.4.8 Traffic has increased within Killaloe at Sites 6 (R463) and 7 (Abbey Street) in both the weekday and weekend surveys. This is likely due to traffic connecting onto the Killaloe by-pass to access the new bridge rather than travelling into the town.

Figure 4.6: Scenario 3 Weekend Vehicle Average



4.4.9 To understand the potential impact on traffic flows due to school holidays and term time the daily vehicle flows have been presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8 to show the variation on the weekday averages and weekend averages respectively.

Figure 4.7: Scenario 3 Average Weekday Daily Vehicles per ATC Site

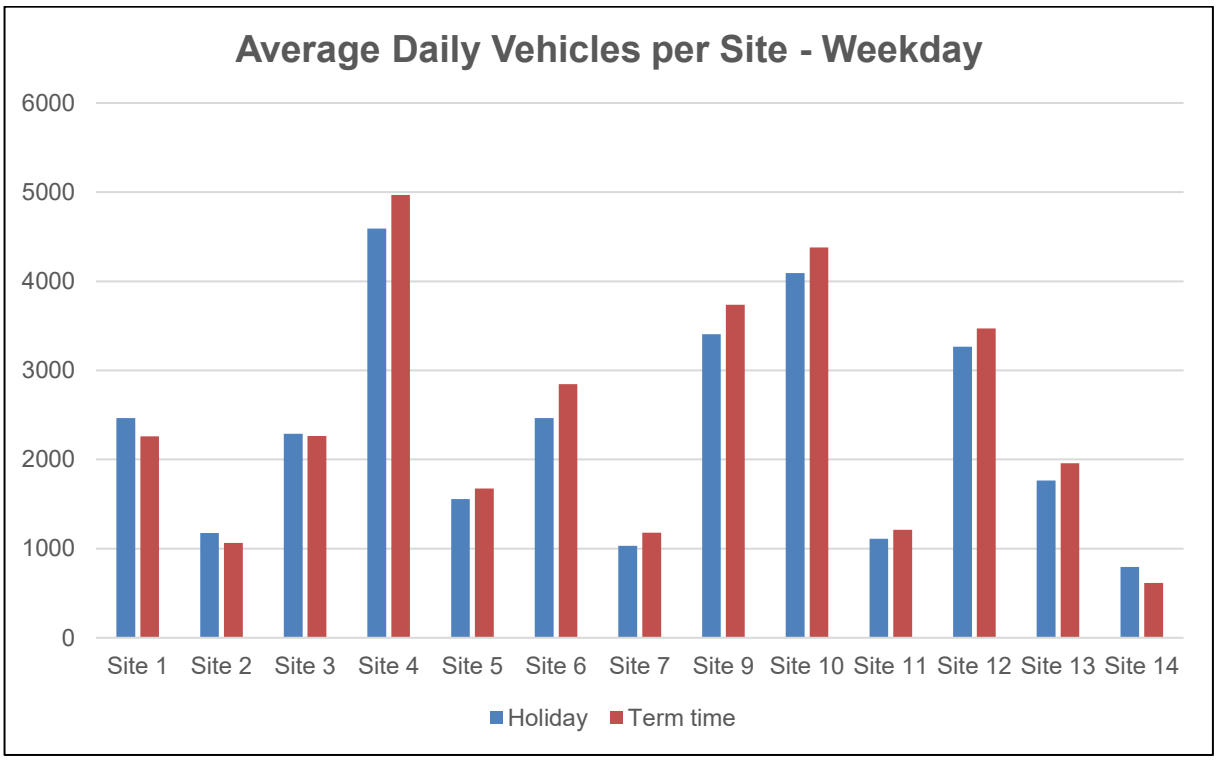
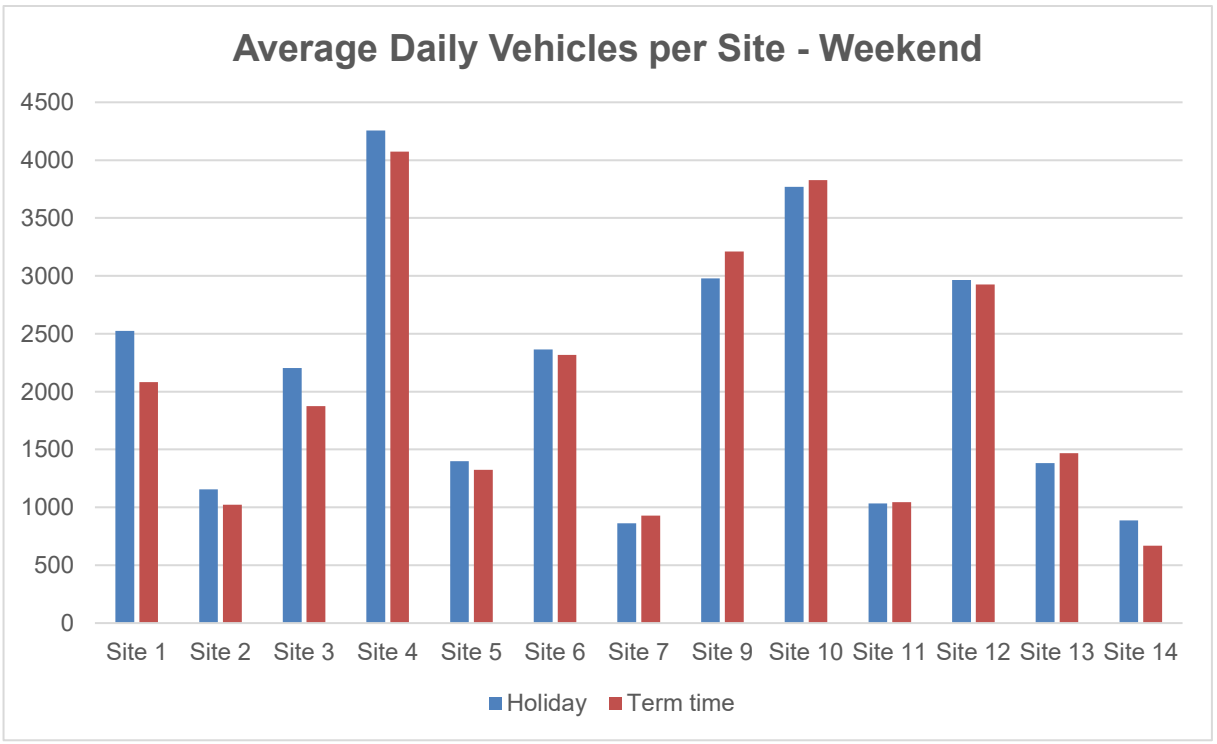


Figure 4.8: Scenario 3 Average Weekend Daily Vehicles per ATC Site



4.4.10 The daily flows are all higher in the term time on the weekdays. On weekends, generally traffic was higher during the school holidays which aligns with both towns being popular holidays destinations when the schools are not in term.

4.4.11 The data indicates that the Killaloe–Ballina area functions as both a commuter corridor and a tourist destination. The bypass effectively accommodates both daily traffic and seasonal surges, supporting economic and tourism activity.

4.5 Summary

4.5.1 The data indicates that all of the traffic which used the old bridge is using the new bridge and that the new bridge is attracting further traffic as overall volumes are higher in both the weekday and weekend averages.

4.5.2 The data indicates a significant relief of through-traffic within the town core, reducing congestion and improving safety and air quality.

5.0 Speed Analysis

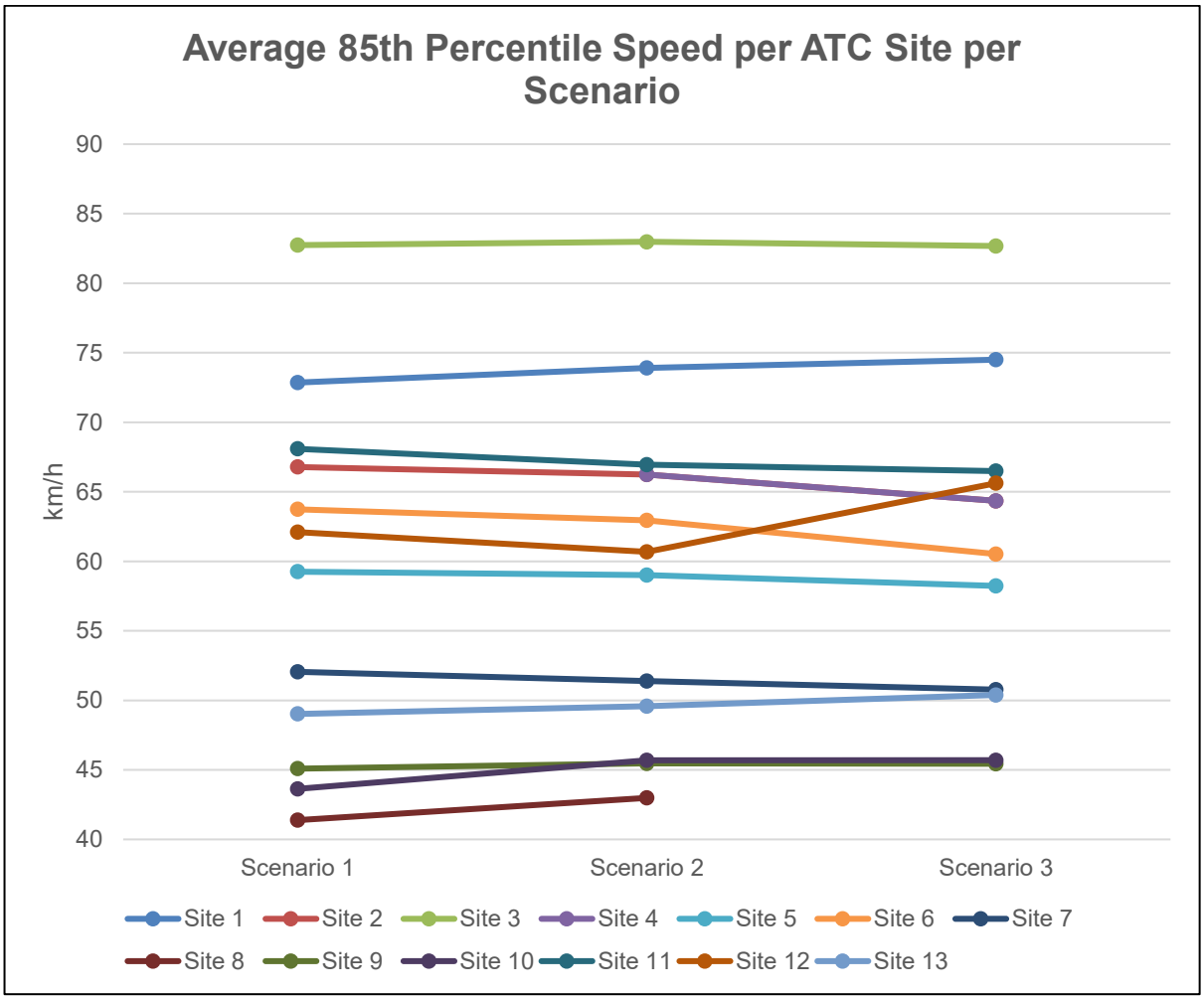
5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section of the report reviews the speed data collected in the ATCs and summarises the results.

5.2 ATC Speed Data

5.2.1 **Figure 5.1** shows the change in average 85th percentile speeds across the ATC sites illustrated in **Figure 2.1**. This is presented across all three scenarios.

Figure 5.1: Average 85th Percentile Speed per Site



5.2.2 **Figure 5.1** shows there was a minimal change in traffic speeds at most sites across the three scenarios. Despite the significant increase in vehicle counts at locations such as Site 3 and Site 6, the minimal impact on traffic speeds suggests that the highways are well equipped to cope with this increased traffic.

5.2.3 The most significant change was at Site 12, the R494 on the Ballina side, which saw an increase from 61 km/h to 66 km/h between Scenarios 2 and 3, and an increase from 62 km/h in Scenario 1. This is

despite the vehicle counts at Site 12 being highest in Scenario 3. This could be due to local users of the new bridge gaining familiarity and confidence using the new road layout.

5.2.4 Some sites had slight decreases in speeds when compared to Scenario 1, such as Site 5, the R463 west of the by-pass on the Killaloe side and Site 11, the R496 on the Ballina side. The changes were 2km/h between the scenarios and are not considered significant.

6.0 Journey Time Analysis

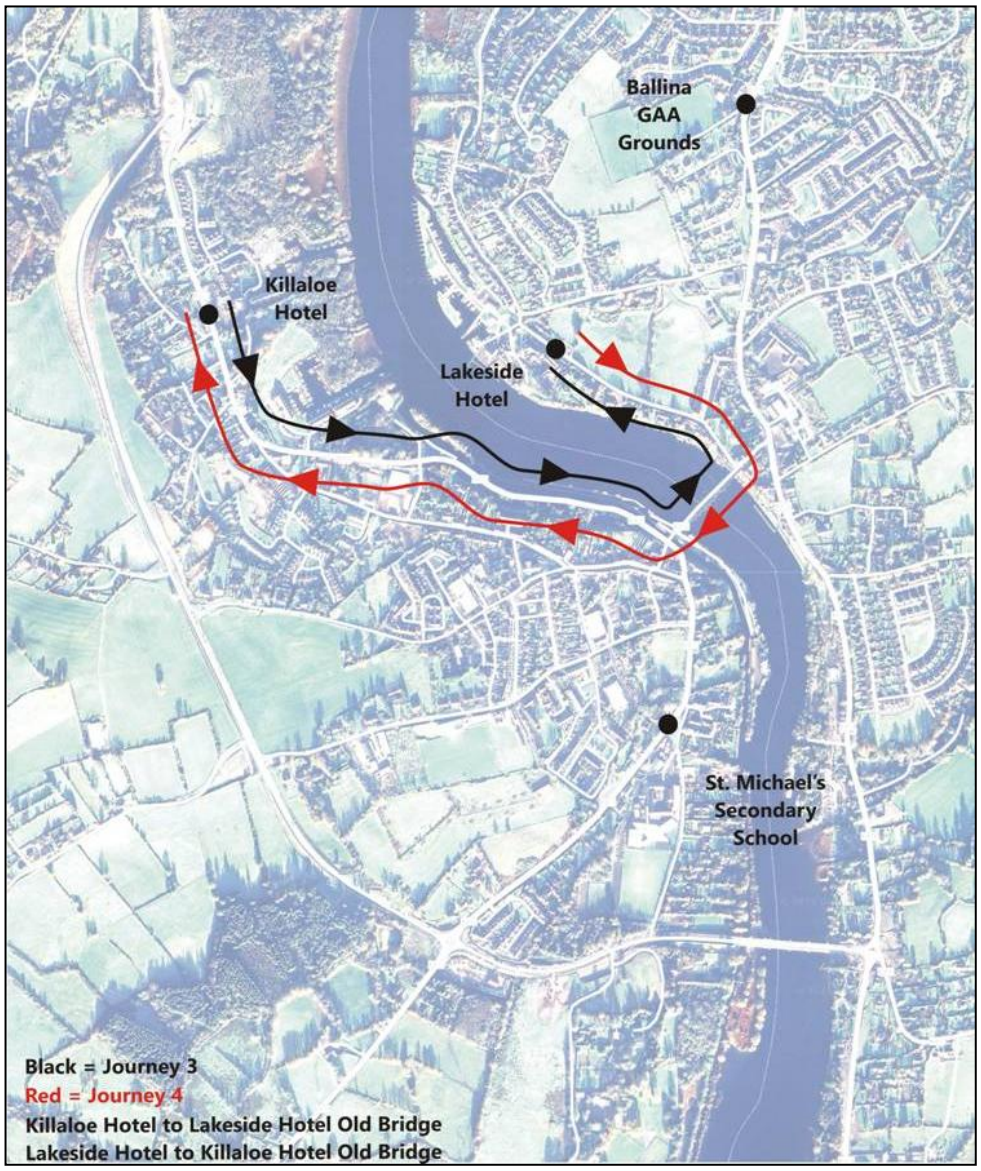
6.1.1 Journey times were collected on 8 routes between Killaloe and Ballina.

6.1.2 This section will focus on Routes 3, 4, 5 and 6, which are between Killaloe Hotel and Lakeside Hotel. Routes 3 and 4 use Ballina Bridge, while Routes 5 and 6 use the new bridge. This allows a comparison between the same start and end points but with one data set using the old bridge and one dataset using the new bridge. It is estimated that Routes 3 and 4, using the old bridge, cover a distance of 2.2km, whereas routes 5 and 6, using the Brian Boru bridge, cover 5.3km.

6.1.3 Routes 5 and 6 were assessed during Scenario 2 and Scenario 3, as the new bridge was open in both periods. Routes 3 and 4 were assessed during Scenario 2 only.

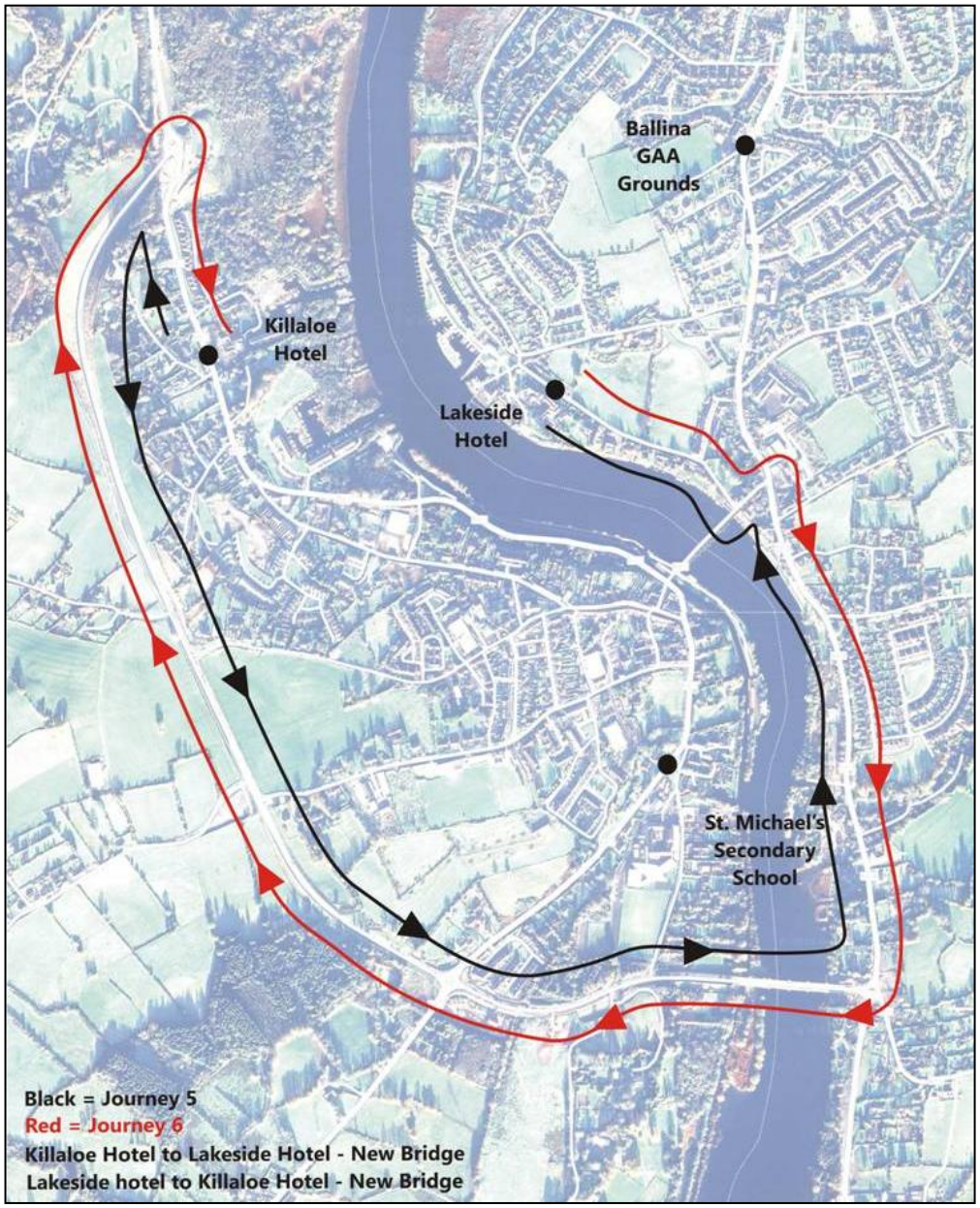
6.1.4 Routes 3 and 4 are illustrated in **Figure 6.1**.

Figure 6.1: Journey Time Routes 3 and 4



6.1.5 Routes 5 and 6 are illustrated in **Figure 6.2**.

Figure 6.2: Journey Time Routes 5 and 6



6.1.6 The comparison between Routes 3 and 5 (Killaloe Hotel to Lakeside Hotel) is shown in **Table 6.1**.

Table 6.1: Killaloe Hotel to Lakeside Hotel Routes 3/5 Comparison (mins:secs)

Journey	Route 3	Route 5 (Scenario 2)	Route 5 (Scenario 3)
Mean Time	4:53	7:50 (+2:56)	6:22 (+1:29)
Median Time	4:47	7:54 (+3:07)	6:23 (+1:36)
Average Speed (km/h)	27	41	50

6.1.7 The comparison between Routes 4 and 6 (Killaloe Hotel to Lakeside Hotel) is shown in **Table 6.2**.

Table 6.2: Lakeside Hotel to Killaloe Hotel Routes 4/6 Comparison (mins:secs)

Journey	Route 4	Route 6 (Scenario 2)	Route 6 (Scenario 3)
Mean Time	4:21	7:02 (+2:41)	6:24 (+2:03)
Median Time	4:07	8:01 (+3:54)	6:16 (+2:09)
Average Speed (km/h)	30	45	50

6.1.8 Both comparisons and directions show that the routes involving the new Brian Boru bridge (Routes 5 and 6) have a longer journey time than the routes using the old bridge. This is to be expected however, given the new bridge routes cover a significantly longer distance – it is estimated that Routes 3 and 4 cover a distance of 2.2km, whereas routes 5 and 6 cover 5.3km.

6.1.9 Where the routes covered the same areas, such as from the Lakeside Hotel to the old bridge stopping point, routes 5 and 6 were consistently faster than 3 and 4. This shows that the highways are moving much faster in scenario 3.

6.1.10 The mean journey time between the Killaloe and Lakeside Hotels reduced by up to 1.5 minutes between Scenarios 2 and 3, despite the greater route distance. This reflects the success of the bypass in relieving congestion through the town centres and providing a more reliable, higher-capacity corridor for through traffic.

6.1.11 Key to note is that the average speeds are significantly higher using the new bridge compared to when using the old bridge (circa an increase of 20km/h). The average speed in both directions in Scenario 2 using the old bridge were circa 30km/h which is very slow and similar to the speeds a commuting cyclist will achieve. This indicates that Routes 3/4 using the old bridge were subject to a large amount of congestion. No survey data was collected in Scenario 1 when only the old bridge was available for use but it is expected that this will be slower as the volume of traffic was higher.

7.0 Pedestrian Analysis

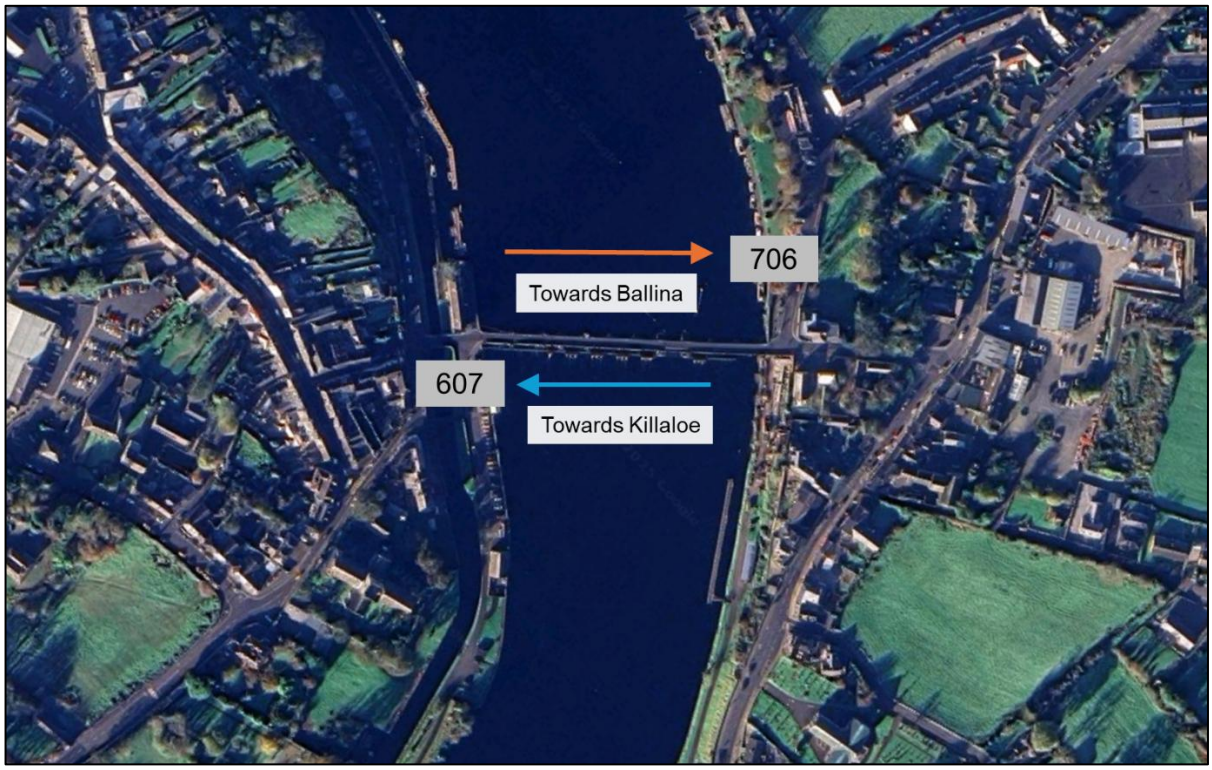
7.1.1 Pedestrian counts were captured on the Ballina Bridge in both directions, towards Killaloe and Ballina respectively. Counts were captured on the following dates for each scenario:

- Scenario 1: Tue 19th November 2024
- Scenario 2: Tue-Thur 27 - 29th May 2025
- Scenario 3: 24th August – 29th September 2025

7.1.2 Due to the limited number of days assessed for Scenarios 1 and 2, pedestrian counts cannot be analysed on a weekday vs weekend basis.

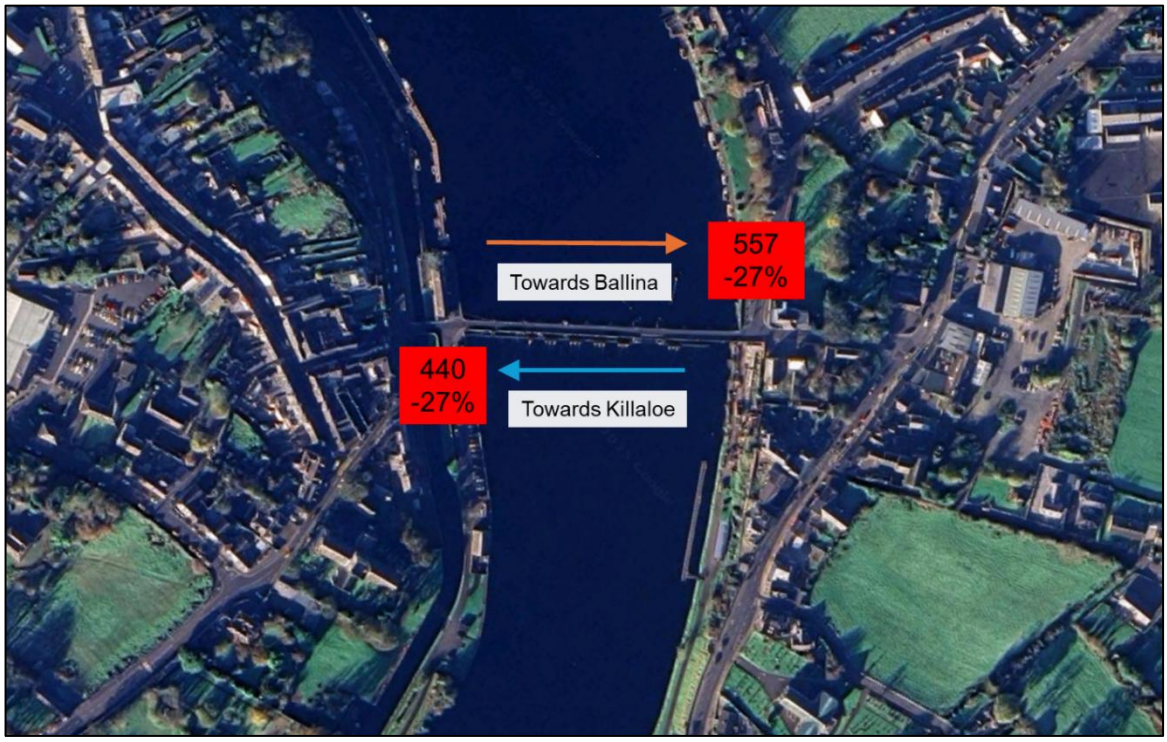
7.1.3 **Figure 7.1** shows the daily pedestrian counts for Scenario 1.

Figure 7.1: Scenario 1 Pedestrian Counts



7.1.4 **Figure 7.2** shows the average daily pedestrian counts for Scenario 2, compared against scenario 1.

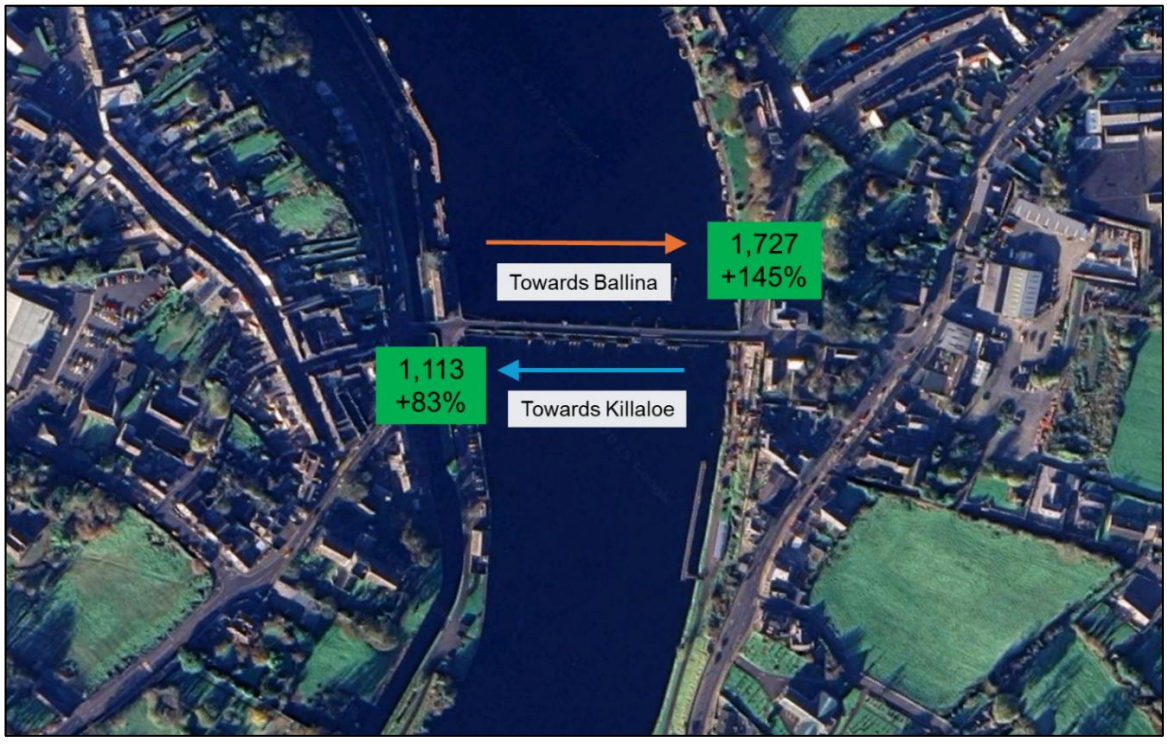
Figure 7.2: Scenario 2 Pedestrian Counts



7.1.5 There was a decrease in pedestrian movements of 27% in both directions during scenario 2. There was a large amount of rainfall, approximately 14mm on the 27th May which could have discouraged residents/visitors from walking.

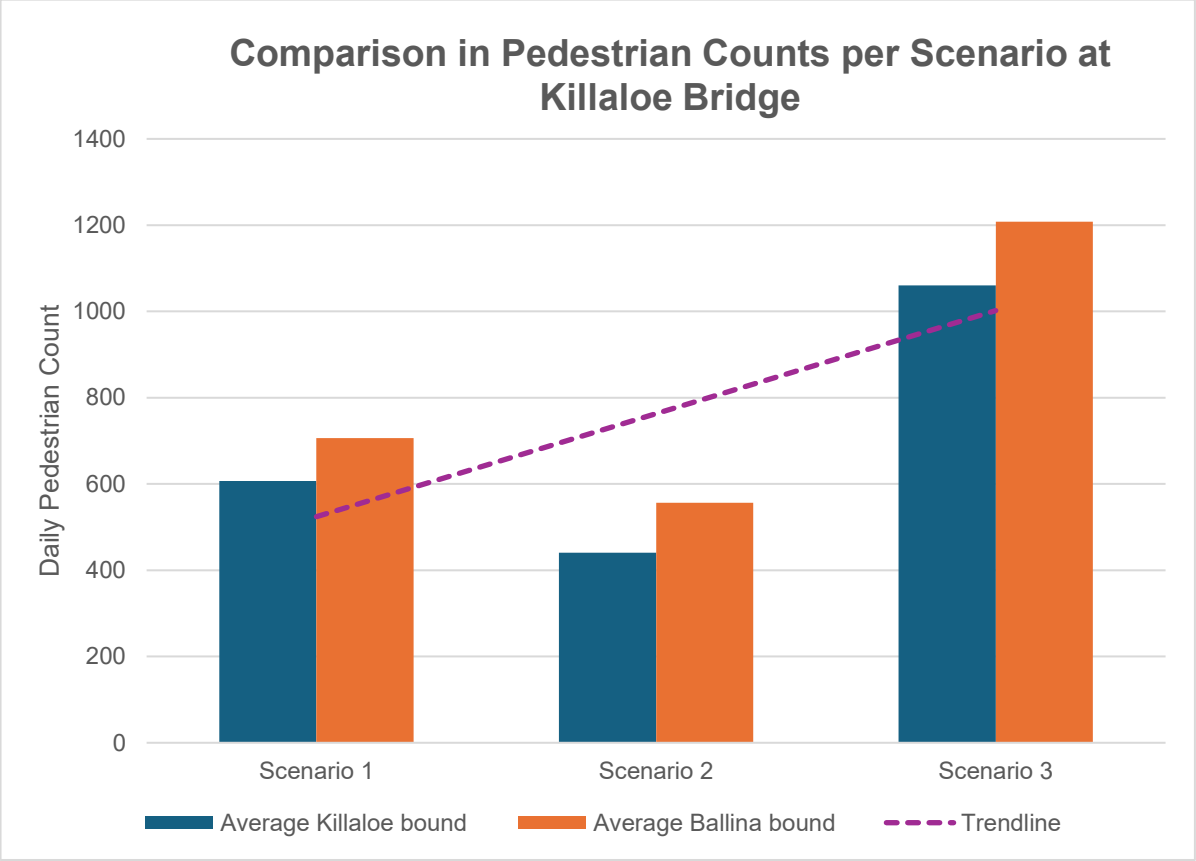
7.1.6 **Figure 7.3** shows the average daily pedestrian counts for Scenario 3, compared against Scenario 1.

Figure 7.3: Scenario 3 Pedestrian Counts



7.1.7 A summary of the pedestrian counts across all three scenarios is shown in **Figure 7.4**.

Figure 7.4: Killaloe Bridge Pedestrian Count Summary



7.1.8 The figures show a significant increase in pedestrian movements in Scenario 3, when the bridge is fully pedestrianised, compared to Scenario 1, particularly towards Ballina which increased by 145%.

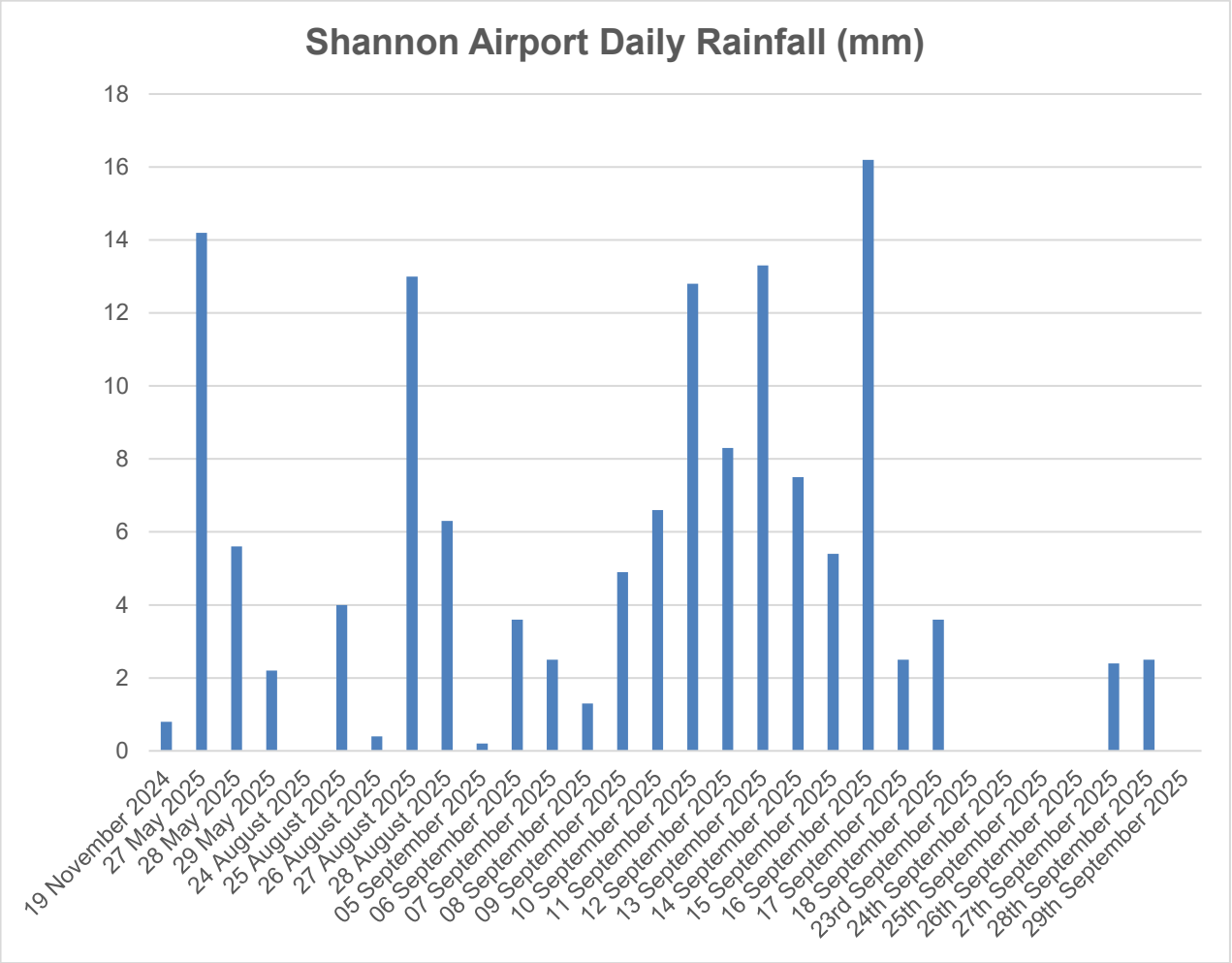
7.1.9 This indicates that opening the bridge to only pedestrians and cyclists has significantly increased its popularity and attractiveness for users; it has significantly encouraged sustainable trip choices.

7.1.10 Some caveats must be made here; the Scenario 3 data is based on a much larger sample than Scenarios 1 and 2, which only had one and three days captured respectively. Scenario 3 also covers the August and September months, which are understood to be peak holiday periods for the area, thereby increasing the average number of pedestrian movements per day.

7.1.11 It is also worth considering the weather and rainfall during the survey period as this will have a large impact on pedestrian movements. The nearest Met Eireann collection point is at Shannon airport. This is presented in **Figure 7.5**. This demonstrates that there was high rainfall during the May 2025 survey (Scenario 2) and for a substantial amount of the Scenario 3 survey period until mid-September. This is likely to have discouraged pedestrians using the old bridge, however, it also highlights the significance that the pedestrian numbers increased so much despite the weather.

7.1.12 This indicates a latent demand for active travel connectivity across the River Shannon between the two towns, which the previous vehicular bridge had constrained.

Figure 7.5: Shannon Airport Daily Rainfall Across Survey Period (mm)



8.0 Summary and Conclusions

8.1.1 The analysis presented within this Transport Assessment demonstrates that the new Brian Boru Bridge and the pedestrianisation of the old Killaloe–Ballina Bridge have delivered measurable benefits to local transport operations and travel behaviour.

- **Traffic Redistribution:** Vehicle counts confirm that traffic previously using the old bridge has successfully transferred to the new bridge. The total number of vehicles crossing the Brian Boru Bridge in Scenario 3 exceeds those previously recorded on the old bridge, indicating an effective redistribution of flows. Traffic volumes have reduced by approximately 800–1,000 vehicles per day entering or leaving Killaloe via the R463, confirming a significant reduction in through-traffic within the town centre. In contrast, moderate increases in flow at Sites 6 and 7 demonstrate that traffic is successfully rerouting to the bypass rather than travelling through the core urban area. This redistribution supports the objectives of the Killaloe–Ballina Town Enhancement and Mobility Plan (TEMP) by improving the quality and safety of local streets.

- **Network Operation:** Despite increased traffic volumes at certain sites, average speeds have remained stable or improved. This indicates that the new bridge and its connecting routes are operating efficiently and that the redistribution of vehicles has not adversely affected the network.

- **Journey Time Efficiency:** Although journey distances have increased, journey times have improved in terms of flow and reliability. Average speeds have risen from approximately 30 km/h (Scenario 2) to 50 km/h (Scenario 3), demonstrating a significant reduction in congestion.

- **Pedestrian Benefits:** The pedestrianisation of the old bridge has resulted in a major increase in pedestrian activity—particularly towards Ballina—enhancing safety, accessibility, and the attractiveness of the area for walking and cycling. This trend confirms a latent demand for active travel connectivity, which the pedestrianised bridge now successfully meets. The bridge has become an attractive and safe route for pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging modal shift and directly supporting the TEMP's sustainable transport goals.

- **Seasonal Patterns:** Weekday flows were higher during school term time, while weekend traffic peaked during school holidays, reflecting the dual role of Killaloe–Ballina as both a commuter corridor and a tourism destination. The bypass has demonstrated sufficient capacity to accommodate both local and tourist traffic without compromising performance.

- **Environmental and Community Impact**: The reduction in through-traffic within the town centres of Killaloe and Ballina supports the aims of the TEMP to create safer, more pleasant urban environments and to promote sustainable modes of travel.

8.2 Conclusion

8.2.1 The trial pedestrianisation of the old Killaloe–Ballina Bridge, alongside the operation of the Brian Boru Bridge, has achieved its intended outcomes:

- Improved traffic management and reduced congestion in both town centres;
- Enhanced network efficiency and journey reliability;
- Increased pedestrian and cyclist activity, supporting sustainable travel; and
- Alignment with the strategic mobility and enhancement objectives for Killaloe and Ballina.

8.2.2 The data provide a robust baseline for future monitoring, supporting the case for permanent pedestrianisation.

8.2.3 Based on the evidence collected and analysed, it is concluded that the pedestrianisation trial has been successful and that permanent pedestrianisation of the old bridge should be considered as a key component of the future mobility and enhancement strategy for the area.

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