

Full Macroom To Baile Bhuirne Bypass Officially Opens

2,200 people were directly involved in the 22km project.

The final section of the N22 Macroom to Baile Bhuirne bypass has been officially opened marking the completion of the €280 million project, funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and progressed under the Government's Project Ireland 2040. The ribbon was cut on the last 6 km section by Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn, Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD and Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan, together with the Chief Executive of Cork County Council Valerie O'Sullivan and Chief Executive Peter Walsh of Transport Infrastructure Ireland on Monday, November 6th.

The new section of road features one of the deepest cuts ever excavated and blasted in Ireland. Over 500,000 m³ of rock was broken and blasted over a two-year period from this section, with the rock recycled to form the foundation of the road throughout the project.

Construction of the 22km road began in January 2020 with contractors Jons Civil Engineering Company Ltd and John Cradock Ltd working together as a joint venture. J.B Barry & Partners are the Contractor's Designer and Mott MacDonald is the Employer's Representative on the project.

The number of work-hours during the construction stage amounts to 1.8 million. There were 2,200 people directly involved including engineers, designers, planners, supervisors, excavator and dumper drivers, carpenters, steel fixers, pipe layers, pavement laying crews and traffic management operatives. Over 300 construction staff were working each day during the peak.

The completed dual carriageway extends from the eastern side of Macroom at Coolcower to the townland of An Sliabh Riabhach on the western side of Baile Bhuirne. Macroom Town with Baile Mhic Íre and Baile Bhuirne bypassed as part of the project, marking a major upgrade on the road infrastructure between Cork and Kerry. It features four junctions and 101 principal structures including four river bridges, four overbridges, 15 underbridges, retaining walls, bases for variable message signs, culverts, and environmental barriers.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Frank O'Flynn said, "Today marks an important day for the people of the Gaeltacht Mhúscraí. When the first section of this project opened in December 2022 air pollution in Macroom town immediately reduced by more than 50%, supporting the process of decarbonisation of Macroom town. We hope to see a similar benefit for Baile Mhic Íre and Baile Bhuirne. The reduction in heavy goods vehicles will make access to the local schools and businesses a lot safer. The improved connectivity between both Cork and Killarney will also make this area even more attractive for housing developments."

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD said, "The completion of this eagerly anticipated bypass will be of great benefit to the residents of Cork and Kerry and the many visitors to this beautiful region. This road will reduce journey times, remove congestion from the towns and villages

along the route and lower the fuel costs associated with idling in traffic congestion. With traffic redirected to the main road, existing roads can be developed to facilitate safer cycling and walking routes between local areas. By improving connectivity between Cork, Killarney and Tralee for business and tourism, this project will boost local, regional and national development. It is in keeping with the Government's approach to bring new life into the centres of our towns and villages and open the door to a range of new opportunities for them, making rural Ireland a better place to live and work and to visit. This project is an impressive feat of engineering and I would like to commend everyone who has been involved from the contractors, to Cork County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland."

Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan said, "With the opening of this road, Baile Mhic Íre and Baile Bhuirne will begin to experience reduced congestion and improved air quality, as has already been seen in Macroom. This will improve the quality of life for local residents and will also increase the attractiveness of active travel. It is also in keeping with the Government's objective of promoting Compact Growth in our town and village centres, which is a National Strategic Outcome under the National Planning Framework."

Ahead of the official opening, hundreds of people took part in the West Muskerry AC, 5km race and walk on the new section of the bypass on Saturday, October 21st. The event raised funds for the Ionad Lae Day Centre in Baile Bhuirne and the local GAA club, Naomh Abán.

Peter Walsh Chief Executive of Transport Infrastructure Ireland stated, "Today is a significant day for the people of County Cork and County Kerry and for all those who use the N22. Bringing this section of the N22 route between Baile Bhuirne and Macroom up to a modern engineering standard, delivers on both safety and efficiency, it is a significant investment by the Government for the region and adds to the continual improvement of the national road network for the benefit of the entire country. It will make a tangible difference to the daily lives of the people who live, work, and travel throughout the area."

Chief Executive of Cork County Council, Valerie O'Sullivan added, "The town of Macroom and its surrounding area has flourished since it was bypassed late last year. The removal of the congestion has made it a more attractive location for motorists to stop on route from Cork to Kerry and sample the services that Macroom has to offer. Macroom's inaugural Music Festival was held in June, followed by the Food Festival in September. I would expect to see similar benefits for the villages of Baile Bhuirne and Baile Mhic Íre. We are committed to achieving sustainable social and economic development in rural areas and making our towns and villages attractive places to live, work and visit. The Macroom to Baile Bhuirne bypass is an integral part of that and I look forward to seeing its impact in the years to come."

Both Baile Bhuirne and Macroom have welcomed a significant number of new projects benefiting both residents and visitors alike. Baile Bhuirne is now home to a new sensory garden, new community centre; a community outdoor space with seating, tree carving and historical information board while in Macroom the new Library and Briery Gap Theatre are due to be completed early next year and will open to the public before the summer. The town's new fire station was recently opened and a new Garda station with divisional headquarters is due to commence in the coming years. Preparations are underway to progress the public realm projects at South Square and Masseytown and to renovate St Colman's Church into an active community space after €7.2m in RRDF funding was approved in December 2022.

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