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The McRae name returns to Killarney as the 2026 Assess Ireland International Rally of the Lakes is officially launched



Excitement is at fever pitch in Killarney, as the 2026 Assess Ireland International Rally of the Lakes was officially launched yesterday (Sunday) in the rally headquarters, The Gleneagle Hotel. A large crowd of rally fans, competitors and organisers gathered in the Kingdom, with the entry list reveal gathering massive interest ahead of the event, which takes place from May 1 to 3.

Clerk of the Course Tim Clifford revealed the 170-strong entry list on the night, which includes a big name in rallying circles, as Max McRae will compete in Killarney for the first time. The 21-year-old nephew of Colin McRae will compete in a Skoda Fabia Rally 2, 21 years to the weekend since his uncle lit up the Killarney roads.





Leading out the crews to Moll's Gap on Saturday morning will be the Derry and Killarney pairing of Callum Devine and Noel O'Sullivan. The duo are looking to secure an unprecedented five Rally of the Lakes crowns in a row, so there will be plenty on the line heading into the loop of 14 stages. Former Killarney winner Josh Moffett seems back to his winning ways in 2026. The championship leader will be second on the road alongside his Limerick co-driver Andy Hayes, with Kilkenny man Eddie Doherty, winner of last year's Circuit of Kerry Rally, still looking for his first Irish Tarmac Rally Championship round win, starting from third. Killarney co-driver Shane Buckley was the winner of the last round at the Circuit of Ireland Rally, and he starts fourth beside Donegal driver David Kelly.

In all, 17 RC2 drivers make up the top end of the entry, including the three Boyle family members Declan, Michael and Matthew, former modified winner Kevin Eves, Ryan Loughran, Cork's Daniel Cronin and Sam Touzel, who makes the trip to Killarney from the Channel Islands.

There is a strong Kerry feel to the modified section. Multiple champion Rob Duggan will face a battle from fellow Killarney man Conor Murphy. Kenmare's Vincent O'Shea will be the leading Darrian on the road, while the likes of Rodney Wilton, Brian Lavelle and Cian Walsh might be looking to upset the local party.

Twelve cars will battle out for historic honours. Donegal man John O'Donnell will lead the crews out with local drivers like Fergus O'Meara, Mark Falvey and Paul Ahern eager to stamp their local knowledge on the event.

The juniors will compete on Saturday, a unique twist in their Killarney itinerary. Cork's Darragh Walsh will be first on the road. The sole all-Kerry crew is Conor Horgan and Aaron O'Halloran in their Citroen Saxo, while Darragh Lynch navigates for Dylan Sheehan of Cork.

Class 25 will bring history back to life on the famous Killarney roads, with former WRC cars running competitively against each other for the first time in their post-competition days in Killarney. Highlights here include Austin McHale in the Ford Focus and Stephen Greaney in





the Toyota Corolla. It will be a competition not to be missed for rally fans making the journey to Killarney for the weekend.

The rally kicks off on Friday, May 1, with a ceremonial start celebration in the heart of Killarney town from 7 pm. The crews then tackle eight stages on Saturday, with a run up Moll's Gap before moving east for stages in the Rathmore area, with the mid-day service halts in the former Eurovision host venue, The Green Glens Arena in Millstreet. Sunday consists of six classic stages: Moll's Gap, Ballaghbeama and a new extended version of Shanera run twice with service in between in Liebherr.

Speaking at the launch, 2026 Assess Ireland International Rally of the Lakes Clerk of the Course Tim Clifford said, "Planning has gone really well, we are looking forward to the event now. We appreciate the work that has been put in by a huge team of volunteers; without them, the event couldn't happen. I'm very happy with the route, it's a good mix of old & new, as well as some stages not run in over 20 years. Keeping the event localised and compact is really important to the competitors and spectators alike. The entry is really strong, so you can expect a great battle up and down the list. I hope everyone has a great weekend. As always, the message is keep the race in its place, spectate responsibly and obey what the marshals tell you; they are there for your safety."

Rally programmes will be in local shops from Wednesday (April 22).

