

1ST MARCH 2026

MSR

MAYO STAGES RALLY



All Set for Mayo Stages Rally 2026

The last nuts and bolts are being tightened on rally cars, race suits and helmets are being dusted down, and navigators from all over parts of Ireland and beyond are logging on to Google Maps to find directions to their accommodation around Westport. The final countdown to the WEST TYRE – Westport Woods Hotel & Spa Mayo Stages Rally 2026 is underway before the high-octane action takes place this weekend. (March 1st)

Rally Countdown ... all go from Friday evening

With competitors arriving from Friday afternoon on, the first task for the drivers and co-drivers after signing-on to the event is on Saturday morning February 28th, when they drive the rally stages in their road cars at normal road speed making pacenotes to use the following day. Later in the day, the rally cars will be presented for Mechanical Scrutineering, which will take place at Westport House, (access entrance beside United Park), where they will have to pass stringent road and rally safety requirements before being allowed to take part in the rally. After that the cars are locked away securely in Parc Ferme (Westport House) ahead of the start of the rally.

Ceremonial Start

For the public, the rally gets underway in earnest on Saturday (February 28th) when the leading competitors as well as all the local drivers gather on South Mall, in Westport for the Ceremonial Start. This, family friendly free event is a great opportunity to see the rally cars and stars up close, and is especially suitable for families with small children.

South Mall will be closed to traffic from Saturday morning with diversions in place. The rally cars will start arriving from 8pm with the cars passing over the Rally ramp where the drivers and co-drivers will be interviewed and waved off by a very special guest.

Austin MacHale is one of Ireland's most decorated rally drivers and remains the only Mayo born winner of the event. He is also a five-time champion in the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship, winning in 1983, 1985, 1986, 1997 and 1998. MacHale who, between national and international rallies, has more than 30 overall wins in total, often speaks about his love for all things Mayo and no doubt conversation on the South Mall next Saturday night will include his views on Mayo GAA and his pride at seeing his sons Aaron and Gareth also compete at the highest level of motorsport.

When the flag drops....

The serious competition starts on Sunday morning, with the leading cars leaving Parc Ferme at 8am to tackle the nine challenging special stages. Details of the location of these nine stages along with safe viewing locations and other event information will be available in the official Mayo Stages Rally Programme which will be available for sale in shops and garages around the area in the coming days

High Quality Entry Field

The 2026 Triton Showers Motorsport Ireland National Rally Championship gets underway on March 1st with the WEST TYRE Westport Woods Hotel and Spa Mayo Stages Rally. Based at the Westport Woods Hotel and Spa, the event has attracted a heavy-hitting entry list, as the best in the business prepare to begin their hunt for the national title.

Leading the field is defending champion Eddie Doherty. The Kilkenny man arrives in Westport with a brand-new Skoda Fabia RS Rally2. Having secured his first major win on the 2025 Circuit of Kerry, Doherty is the man to beat as he looks to start his title defence with a first Mayo victory.

He faces stiff competition from a deep field of Rally2 machinery. Michael Boyle, another first-time winner in 2025, will be campaigning a similar Skoda Fabia RS and is widely considered one of the fastest drivers in the country when the pace heats up.

Joining them is former champion Josh Moffett, who has made the switch to a Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 for the 2026 season. Moffett was in clinical form last year with wins in

Cavan and the Ravens Rock, and his adaptation to the new Yaris will be a major talking point.

Adding further intrigue to the top-flight is championship newcomer David Kelly in a Skoda Fabia RS. Kelly showed blistering pace at the recent Galway International and even led last season's Sligo Rally for a spell.

The Donegal man has committed to a full national campaign. He is joined by the experienced Declan Boyle, a former champion also in a Skoda, and Cathan McCourt, who drives new Ford Fiesta after a debut run in Galway.

The Ford contingent is led by Gary Kiernan, now entering his third season with the Fiesta Rally2, and Jason Dickson, who showed consistent improvement throughout every round last year. Kevin Eves continues his transition into four-wheel-drive machinery; if he finds the "sweet spot" that saw him net a podium in Cavan last year, he will be a threat.

Shane Quinn and Keelan Grogan also feature in Fiestas with Grogan showing serious potential after a recent second-place finish at the recent Yeats Ridge Forest Rally

The Citroen C3 Rally 2 camp is equally strong. Cork's Daniel Cronin, a winner in Carlow May 2024, returns to the national trail.

He is joined by championship sponsor Paul Barrett and Cal McCarthy, with the latter using Mayo as vital seat time ahead of his home event in West Cork just a fortnight later. Joseph McGonigle, another former winner in the West also makes a welcome return to the series in a C3.

Matthew Boyle continues the Boyle dynasty's strong presence in Irish rallying.

International interest comes from the Isle of Man's Mark Kelly, a regular winner in the UK and a specialist on circuit-based events, who brings his VW Polo GTI R5 to the Mayo lanes.

Modified Battle

The modified category promises its usual brand of high-speed drama. All eyes will be on Kevin Gallagher in the spectacular Darrian T90 GTR. He faces a direct challenge from Patrick McHugh, also in a Darrian, while the Escort specialists will be led by John Doogan and Mark Alcorn. Meanwhile, Chris Armstrong returns to defend his Mk2 Challenge title, rounding out what is set to be an explosive opening round in Westport.

Locals All Set For Mayo Stages Rally

Needless to say many local competitors will be hoping to get good results on their local event. Top seeded local river David Carney has Ray Fitzpatrick alongside in a Ford Fiesta Rally2, the pair are seeded at No.28. The next highest local competitor seeded No.35 is Brian Lavelle. The rapid Achill driver faces a tough challenge against the top competitors in class 14 in his Escort Mk2.

Westport's David Healy who is seeded No.53 is hoping to pick up in 2026 where 2025 finished as a series of impressive results saw him and his navigator Martin Byrne from Cavan claim overall 11F National Rally Championship Awards and fifth place overall in the 2wd championship standings. Mervyn Deane from Williamstown wheels out the EMP Furniture sponsored class 14 Escort at number 67. Trevor Burke co-drives.

Another Westport driver Christopher Rose is in a class 11F Honda Civic running number 109 just ahead of Balla driver Colm Connor also in 11F who has Eamonn Bonner on the notes alongside at No.111. Flying the Flag for the Ronan Rally team are Bekan's James (in a Ford Fiesta R2) and Lorcan and Colm Ronan in a Nissan Sunny who are 131 and 132 respectively.

Kevin Dempsey competes in class 2A in his Peugeot 206 with No.146 on the doors while Ian Chambers makes his rally debut (with Ella Conway on the pacenotes) at No.148, and is chased down by Belcarra butcher Fiachra Moran (No.149) who makes a return to stage rallying after a 16 year sabbatical, Fiachra has his son Oisin onboard in his Honda Civic Type R.

Fintan McGurrin from Balla makes his foray into rallying with Keelan Joyce alongside in a Toyota Corolla, the pair are No.154. Veteran rally driver James McGreal who has Trevor O'Connell on the pacenotes, carries No.50 on the side of his Mitsubishi Evo paying homage to the Mayo Motorsport Club's 50th year of existence.

Barry McGing from Claremorris takes on the challenge of the Dacia Sandero Cup in 2026 as he makes his debut with Conor O'Rourke on the pacenotes. They carry the No.411 in the Dacia section.

A number of local Co Drivers are also in action in the event with Darragh Mullen alongside Oran England at No.51, while Ivan Hernon sits alongside Alan Sheridan in a Ford Escort MK2 at No.68. Derek Molloy is in action at No.120 with Darren McGuinness in a Class 15 Subaru Impreza while Bradley O'Donnell is No.160 with Colin Gray in a Civic.

Other Championships

The Rally will also be the opening round of the very popular Border Rally Championship, which in 2026 celebrates its 35th year. Sligo Pallets have played a massive role as title sponsor in this Championship with owner (and long time Mayo Stages Rally competitor and Mayo club member) Andrew Mullen supporting the Championship with investment and passion for the last 15 years. This weekend's rally in Westport will feature no fewer than nine former Border Rally Champions competing on the event, defending champion Mickey Conlon in his Escort Mk2, will be joined by Declan Boyle, James McGreal, Gary McPhillips, Jonathan Pringle, Justin Smyth and Gary Kiernan who will all be behind the wheel while Arthur Kierans is navigating James McCarville and Martin Byrne as a navigator winner is with David Healy in the Honda Civic

The Rally also plays host to the Top Part West Coast Rally Championships which has seen its sponsor, Top Part in situ since the championship formation in 1993.

The 2026 Dacia Sandero Challenge Cup, in association with Motorsport Ireland is also in Mayo for its opening 2026 round, the Cedar Motors Dacia-backed production class rally is designed to give new entrants into the sport and existing competitors an affordable and practical way to participate in the Motorsport Ireland National Rally Championship

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Marshals Needed

To run a major event like the Mayo Stages Rally is a major undertaking, requiring the help of a large numbers of helpers. Mayo and District Motorsport Club is looking for additional marshals to ensure a successful running of the event. If you would like to help out, contact chief marshal John Duffy on 087 9583240 – your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Women in Motorsport

Sport Ireland Women in Sport Week 2026 will take place from March 2nd to 8th. The aim of Women in Sport Week is to **Celebrate every woman and girl who plays, coaches, officiates, volunteers, works in, and leads on Women in Sport.**

Motorsport Ireland proudly supports and encourages women to participate in motorsport, both locally and internationally. With numerous opportunities across various disciplines, women can get involved as competitors or volunteers, with events happening nearly every weekend across the country.

Mayo & District Motorsport Club would like to take this opportunity to shine a light on the many women both competing and officiating at Mayo Stages Rally. Female Co-drivers on the event include at Safety car 004 Susan Smyth, No.79 Michelle Silke Cooper, No.101 Charlotte Egan, No.147 Megan Ryan, No.148 Ella Conway, No.157 Charlene Mitchell, No.401 Lauren Doherty and driving her Honda Civic at No.159 Aine Lonergan.

Also the many female Rally Officials; Ruthann, Rosemary, Mary, Sandra, Noelle, Martina and those helping at Rally Office, timekeeping and to the female marshals both on the stages and around Westport this weekend.

About the Mayo Stages Rally

The Mayo Stages Rally is one of the biggest sporting events to take place in the region and brings significant revenue into the area. In addition to the rally competitors, their service crews, friends and family, many thousands of spectators, estimated at least in the tens of thousands will visit Mayo over the weekend. With all these people requiring accommodation as well as food and beverages, it is clear to see that the Mayo Stages Rally brings a welcome boost to the local economy.

About Mayo & District Motorsport Club

From its inception in 1976, Mayo & District Motorsport Club has played an important role in supporting and developing motorsport activity in the county. Originally founded as Ballina Motor Club, in 1999 the club changed its name to more accurately reflect the broader area from where it draws its support. Affiliated to the national motorsport organisation Motorsport Ireland, the club promotes official motorsport activity in Mayo, drawing members from all over the county as well as neighbouring regions.