



## **BALLYFINNANE FESTIVAL OF SPEED IS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED**

Kerry Motor Club and the Ballyfinnane Community Council launched The Brian O'Neill Garden Equipment and Trailers Ballyfinnane Festival of Speed in the mid-Kerry village on Monday evening. This brand-new event will celebrate 120 years of closed-road motorsport in County Kerry on July 16.

On July 15 1903, Charles Rolls, who a year later became a founding partner of the Rolls Royce Motor Company won the Kerry Hillclimb, the final event in the first-ever Irish Speed Fortnight. The event paved the way for closed road motorsport in County Kerry and today the county boasts two very active motor clubs and four events ranging from an international rally, a national rally, a club rally and a historic rally.

Next month Kerry Motor Club and Ballyfinnane Community Council will join forces to run a festival of motoring in Ballyfinnane. The highlight of the July 16 event will be a recreation of a speed hill climb in the area. It will be the first time since the mid-1980s that Kerry Motor Club has hosted a speed event in Kerry and as well as a host of local rally cars several single-seater formula racing cars are expected to contest the event.

Local business, Brian O'Neill Garden Equipment and Trailers was announced as the event's title sponsor at Monday night's launch. Additional support comes from Wharton Tool Hire and Moriarty's Central Car Sales.

Modern safety rules prevent the original course from being used but a new course has been identified by both Kerry Motor Club and the Motorsport Ireland Hillclimb Commission that will see the finish line almost beside the entrance to the Ballyfinnane Community Council's hall. As a result, the famous crossroads beside the Shanty Bar will become a hive of activity on the day with the official pitstop for the event set to take place within 500 metres in each direction of the pub.

Around 80 cars are expected, and each competitor will get between three and five runs over the course with the overall winner decided by the driver who sets the fastest time of the day on any of the runs.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to the local community, whose unwavering support has made this event possible. Their enthusiasm and generosity have provided us with the resources and encouragement needed to bring this celebration of motorsport to life. Thank you for embracing our shared love for motorsport and for being an integral part of this event," said the clerk of the course Sean Moriarty at the event's launch.

The weekend's activities kick off on Saturday when The Kingdom Veteran, Vintage and Classic Car Club and the Irish Veteran and Vintage Car Club host a road run of period and classic cars from Castlemaine Village to their monument at the top of the original hill. The KVVCC will issue full details of their event in due course but over 100 cars including close to 30 period cars are expected at this event which is due to pass through Ballyfinnane on the afternoon of July 15.

Later that day the first of the Kerry Motor Club-hosted activities will begin with the safety inspection on competing cars set to take place from 2pm at Kerry Agricultural Services in the heart of Ballyfinnane. Drivers' briefings and marshals' sign-on will take place in the Community Hall from 2pm until 7pm.

A driver and car parade will take place in the village on Saturday night with a ceremonial start set to take place at the crossroads at around 9pm. Afterwards, there will be entertainment in the Shanty Bar.

The main action is scheduled for Sunday and a massive traffic management plan is in place for the day. Roads will be closed from at least 3kms from the village, there will be designated parking at these points.

The organisers will provide a free shuttle bus service into the heart of the village. This service is only open to people who buy official programmes, and these will be available to buy (cash only) from the car park attendants. A more detailed traffic management plan will be published nearer the event.

As well as the racing activities on Sunday, the Killarney Valley Classic and Vintage Club have come on board to organise a massive classic car display near the village. Over 200 cars are expected to go on show all day and a dedicated classic car-only entrance will operate from the Tralee/Farmer's Bridge side.

The Killarney club will also host live music and catering vans at their display. There will also be a dedicated 'Blue Badge' holder entrance and a dedicated parking area will be available in the old creamery yard in the village – access from the Farmer's Bridge/Tralee side.

Meanwhile, the village itself will be very busy on Sunday. There will be live commentary of the day's proceedings from a broadcast unit in the village. The organisers have secured spectator zones thanks to the support of local farmers and landowners. Other areas will remain strictly out of bounds for safety and operational reasons and attending spectators should seek advice from the many volunteer marshals on duty. Adding to the occasion there will be a static display of local road racing motorcycles and other side shows.

"I extend my gratitude to the hill climb competitors and fellow organisers who have poured their heart and soul into making this event a reality. Your unwavering commitment to excellence and your camaraderie have created an atmosphere that is filled with anticipation, excitement, and friendly competition," added Mr Moriarty.

“Our hope for this event is not only to witness incredible feats of speed and skill but also to foster an environment of enjoyment and friendship. Let us embrace the spirit of sportsmanship, share our stories and experiences, and forge lasting connections that will endure far beyond the finish line. Together, let us create memories that will be treasured for years to come.”