



Brian O'Neill Garden Equipment and Trailers Ballyfinnane Festival of Speed latest

Some of the fastest racing cars ever seen in Kerry are on their way to the Kingdom to compete in the Brian O'Neill Garden Equipment and Trailers Ballyfinnane Festival of Speed. The July 16 event celebrates 120 years of closed road motorsport in Kerry.

Over 50 entries have been received for the speed test element of the festival and as well as a host of local rally cars, several single-seater racing cars are also in the line-up. It is the first time since the mid-1980s that single-seater racing cars have competed in a closed-road event in Kerry. Kerry Motor Club previously ran a hillclimb on the Castlemaine road out of Tralee in 1985 and 1986. It is 23 years since the club ran a hillclimb. Back in 2000 they shared organising duty with Limerick Motor Club for a two-day event, but those two events were run Treaty County and not Kerry.

Among the spectacular cars taking part in the Ballyfinnane event is the Gould GR37 Formula 3 car that Limerick's Ben O'Brien used to win an event in France last month. Northern Ireland's John Donnelly, a regular hillclimb podium finish in Irish national events has entered his Pilbeam MP62 racing car while Rusell Stanworth has entered in a Reynard Formula Opel racing car.

Organisers Kerry Motor Club have also been in touch with the owner of a 1918 Buick race car (pictured) and confirmation of its appearance at the event is expected by the end of the week. "There is something for everyone at this spectacular festival of motoring and motorsport," said event clerk of the course Sean Moriarty.

Local rally drivers entered include Colin Nelligan who will make his debut in a new Ford Fiesta. Drivers like Stephen O'Connor, David Griffin and Keith O'Connor, all members of the organising team, have entered their Toyota Starlet, Toyota Corolla and Honda Civic respectively. London-based Killarney man, the chairman of the London Irish Motor Club, will also compete in the event. He will double drive a car supplied by a member of the Kerry Motor Club.

Kerry Motor Club member James Kissane is a regular competitor on hillclimb events. He got a chance to exam the course earlier this week. He said: "A nice bit of road, it looks good for things to run smooth. The start has plenty space to que and wide to turn cars."

Road closures will be in place from around 4kms each direction from Ballyfinnane crossroads and admission is by programme purchase – cash only – from the parking attendants at each entrance. Official programmes will go on sale locally this weekend and holders of pre-purchased programmes will be granted access at the entrances.

Due to the long distances between the parking zones at the Firies and Gortalea sides, the organisers will offer a free shuttle bus service to the venue. Parking restrictions will apply on all approach roads to the car parks, particularly the Gortalea side as this is an emergency evacuation zone.