

Road Revamp is Essential for Region



The National Development Plan (NDP, 2018-2027) commits to the enhancement and upgrading of “accessibility between urban centres of population and their regions, in parallel with the initiation of compact growth of urban centres”. News that the N25 New Ross Bypass/Barrow Bridge project is ahead of schedule and is due to open in June of next year is welcome. It will bring to an end years of backlogs into New Ross during peak hours and may, in time, lead to a narrowing of the current route connecting New Ross to Waterford once it loses its national primary road status.

It's important to stress that, in addition to the Thomas Francis Meagher Bridge and Waterford Bypass, massive strides have been taken and huge investments have been made over the past decade to improve the South East's road network. But there's more to when it comes to improving connecting within the region, as well as with Cork and the South West, in addition to Limerick and the West.

And if an 'Atlantic Economic Corridor' is to be established as a genuine counterweight to the Greater Dublin Area, then improved access from Waterford and Wexford to Cork, Limerick and Galway is essential.

The Government's much trumpeted Project Ireland 2040 document outlines 22 sections of national road which will, it states “be progressed through pre-appraisal and early planning during 2018 to prioritise projects which are proceeding to construction in the National Development Plan. Regarding the South East, such works in the region are restricted to the N24, namely Waterford to Cahir and Cahir to Limerick Junction. The 128-kilometre N24 vies with the N20 Cork to Limerick road as the poorest section of national primary road in the State.

Meanwhile the seemingly eternal roadworks on the 125-kilometre N25 (Cork Road), now relocated in Castlemartyr after the Killeagh works, have done nothing for motorists driving between both cities, and made a mockery of alleged ambulance journey times for cardiac patients access Cork University Hospital from UHW.

The N25, when it comes to the NDP, does not appear to be in line for any short to immediate term improvement, so with that in mind, it would be helpful if the N24 works from Waterford to Cahir were prioritised, thereby providing enhanced access to Cork via the M8.

Plans for bypassing both Mooncoin and Carrick-on-Suir have long been drawn up and await budgeting. And when one considers the eight school buildings which face directly onto the N24 in Mooncoin and Carrick alone, accounting for over 2,000 pupils, it doesn't require any glossy NDP brochure to tell us that this road requires a significant upgrade. Indeed, it should have been delivered years ago.

As of yet, there has been no 'bells and whistles' declaration about the envisaged N24 works but no doubt, once it's been budgeted for, we'll probably be subject to more than one official announcement by the Government. And given that we still await confirmation of the Government's financial support for the North Quay project in Waterford, one suspects we're some time away yet from any news on the redevelopment of a national primary, inter-regional/city route no longer fit for purpose.