'The M50 is moving freely...'

'The M50 is moving freely, with no major traffic delays to report.'

Twelve months ago such a statement was unheard of in radio traffic reports but is now the normal experience for up to 100,000 daily users of the motorway.

The M50 is now opened to three lanes from the M1 Interchange to the Sandyford Interchange, with a fourth lane also open between Interchanges. Recent months have also seen the M1/M50 interchange opened to traffic on a freeflow arrangement. Many of the 100,000 daily users of the M50 will have seen that the N2 and N3 interchanges are progressing well. These two interchanges, which will also have freeflow arrangements, are expected to be fully opened to traffic before the end of 2010.

Richard Neuling, project manager, Atkins M50 PPP scheme, says that the clearest measure of the project's success is the fact that, despite its unquestionable status as Ireland's most complex road scheme, it remains within programme and to budget.

The current upgrade of the M50 is being undertaken via a Public Private Partnership contract, which involves the upgrade and widening of 24km of the motorway, the upgrading of seven interchanges and the operation and maintenance of 42km of motorway for a concession period of 35 years. M50 Concession Ltd, the company who are carrying out this PPP contract, is a consortium including Global via Infraestructuras, Sacyr Concessions (both Spanish) and PJ Hegarty. The construction company M50D&C are also a Spanish/Portuguese/Irish consortium involving FCC Construcción, Sacyr, Somague and PJ Hegarty.

The photograph shows one of the final viaduct beams being installed over the N3 dual carriageway last month.

Atkins Ireland are designers to the construction consortium and are responsible for design of the upgrade and widening of 24km of the motorway and the upgrading of seven interchanges, including all roadworks, structures and environmental design. Regular users of the M1 travelling under the M1/M50 interchange will have noticed two new bridges, both in excess of 100 metres in length, and both triple span using composite curved steel beams with a concrete deck. Both bridges were constructed over the live M1 motorway.

The largest structure on the project is a major viaduct at the N3 interchange and users of the N3 interchange southbound off ramp will have noticed the progress that has been made on this structure in recent months. The 155 metre-long viaduct has five spans and crosses over the Dublin-Sligo railway line, the Royal Canal and the N3 dual carriageway road, using precast curved concrete beams up to 34 metres in length and 200 tonnes in weight. These beams are internally post-tensioned after fabrication and externally post-tensioned at the joints after erection on site. Currently, the beam erection is nearing completion, and some deck sections have been poured.

Cinema Operator Anchors Treasury Scheme

UK cinema operator Vue Entertainment has agreed to open a venue in the new Spring Cross centre in Ballymun, which is being developed by Treasury Holdings.

Work on Spring Cross will begin in mid-2011 and the development is set to form a centrepiece of the regeneration of Ballymun. Phase 1 of the development has a Metro station integrated into it as well as a library, restaurants, retail and other leisure uses. When built, Metro North will mean Spring Cross is 15 minutes to the city centre and 10 minutes from the airport.

'The agreement with Vue is great news for the Spring Cross project and the regeneration area of Ballymun but also great news for North Dublin,' says Niall Kavanagh, director of development for Treasury Holdings. 'There is a distinct lack of leisure and restaurant uses in this part of Dublin and Phase 1 of Spring Cross will provide these much needed facilities to the area which now is home to IKEA, with the new Dublin Airport and Dublin City University close by.'

Vue currently operates one of Ireland's biggest cinema complexes at Liffey Valley.