

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

“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 on a site with up to 100,000 vehicles passing through each day, it remains within programme and to budget. “Standing back from the day to day issues and looking at it objectively, the success of the project so far is a huge achievement, both for us and our clients.”

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 7 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, are a consortium including Global Via Infraestructuras, Sacyr Concessions (both Spanish) and Irish firm PJ Hegarty. The construction company, M50D&C, are also a Spanish/Portuguese/Irish consortium involving FCC Construcción, Sacyr, Somague and PJ Hegarty.

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 7 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 100m 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 155m long viaduct has 5 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 34m in length and 200t 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.

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

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About Atkins

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Atkins is one of the world's leading providers of professionally based consulting and support services employing over 17,000 people worldwide.

Atkins employs more than 150 staff in Ireland with offices in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Belfast.