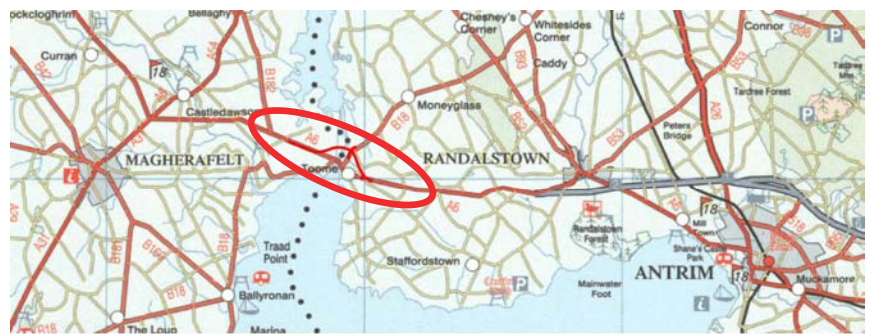


Motorway plans announced in the House of Commons in 1964 envisaged that a motorway would be constructed to Antrim and then fork and give motorways to Castledawson and to beyond Ballymena. Later, the motorway to Ballymena would be extended to Coleraine and on to Londonderry. The first 2.8 miles section of the M22 between Dunsilly and Ballygrooby (East of Randalstown) was opened to traffic on 16th August 1971: it was constructed by Farrans and cost £1.9M to build. The second 1.4 miles section of the M22 between Ballygrooby and Artresnahan (the Randalstown Bypass) was opened to traffic on 30th January 1973: it was constructed by Graham and cost £1.2M to build. The plan to continue the M22 to Castledawson was subsequently abandoned.



A6 Toome Bypass

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A lesser standard improvement was considered in the mid 1970s. Roads Service compared the construction of a new offline high standard single carriageway road from Artresnahan (west of Randalstown) to Donnelly's Bridge (west of Toome) with improving the existing road to a high standard single carriageway. This established the concept of improving the existing road to a high standard single carriageway with an offline high standard single carriageway bypass of Toome. Part of this road proposal was included in the Antrim Area Plan 1984—2001 i.e. construction of a

short offline single carriageway bypass skirting around the northeast periphery of Toome, linking to the existing bridge. A Private Finance Initiative bypass was mooted in the mid 1990s.

In 1992, a mini roundabout was

installed at the Main Street—Roguary Road junction in Toome. This successfully reduced traffic speeds and traffic collisions in the village but exacerbated traffic congestion at peak times. This was replaced in 1998 by a more elaborate one-way traffic management system. Whilst this helped the throughput of traffic in the village, it was accepted as a short term fix because the junctions at either end offered limited

spare capacity. Speaking at the opening of the one-way system, The Minister for Regional Development Lord Dubbs assured local residents that the one-way system was a temporary expedient to relieve the traffic bottleneck and that work would continue on the planning and construction of a bypass.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's £365M Regeneration Initiative package announced in May 1998 included £8M for a bypass of Toome. The 3.5 kilometre long dual carriageway Toome Bypass was opened to traffic on 15th March 2004: it was constructed by FP McCann and cost £18M to build. West of the River Bann, environmentally sensitive winter feeding grounds grazed by migratory Whooper Swans imposed severe constraints on the bypass alignment. The bypass is constructed on low embankment across the wide River Bann floodplain and is carried over the River Bann on a tied arch steel bridge.



Tied Arch Bridge carrying Toome Bypass over the Lower River Bann

CHANCELLOR'S WINDELL

BUSINESS TELEGRAPH, TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1998

THE PACKAGE

£150m ENTERPRISE FUND

SMEs 100% first year capital allowances
SMEs venture capital fund
10-city north America marketing tour
IDB maximising local supply chain scheme
LEDU enterprise excellence programme

£129m INVESTMENT FUND

West Link road and motorway bridges, £35m;
Belfast/Larne road, £10m; Loughbrickland/Newry road, £15m; Antrim/Ballymena road, £7m;
Londonderry/Ballygawley road, £12m; Toome by-pass, £8m; St Angelo air port, Fermanagh, £1m; Beef marketing programme, £11m;
Worst housing estates, £2m; Education, £28m.

£21m INNOVATION/TOURISM FUND

Queen's University science park, £10m;
Research and development, £3m; Tourism, £4m; IT for schools, £4m.

£65m EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS FUND

New Deal for long-term unemployed over-25s, £42m; New Deal for sick and disabled, £9m;
Ramping up skills base, £14m.