



Westport's Sentinel is Ireland's favourite architectural project

Westport and County Mayo are celebrating yet another national accolade with the recent announcement that Mayo County Council's Sentinel sculpture and its associated public realm space has won the **Royal Institute of Architects** of Ireland (RIAI) People's Choice Award. This makes the Sentinel and its public realm space the nation's favourite architectural project in 2016.

Chief executive of Mayo County Council, Peter Hynes, welcomed the news of the Sentinel's success saying: "This is a fantastic achievement for all involved and marks the culmination of 20 years of careful architectural management of the built fabric of Westport. The Sentinel and its surrounding public realm space was up against significant competition from outstanding architectural projects across the entire country and I would like to commend the work of Ronan Halpin, Simon Wall, all the Mayo County Council team, and the many community representatives who were involved in bringing this complex project to such a successful conclusion."

The Sentinel sculpture was commissioned through national competition to celebrate Westport's winning of *The Irish Times* newspapers Best Place to Live in Ireland Competition in 2013. The finished piece was proudly unveiled recently, by American Ambassador Kevin O'Malley, whose grandparents are from Westport.

Cathaoirleach of the West Mayo Municipal District, Cllr Brendan Mulroy, said: "Once again, a great success story for Westport." He also congratulated his colleagues on the council and the management team who backed the project since day one, and said it was great to start his first week in the job with such positive news.

The winning project is unusual in a sense, that it

is collaboration, between a sculptor, Ronan Halpin from the island of Achill, and Simon Wall the town architect to Westport, who designed the surrounding public realm space to celebrate the piece sculpture. The new public space resolves what was a very triangular space left over at the junction of two very steep streets. In essence it's a new triangular public space that now rises out of the ground like the fore deck of a boat, and Halpin's sculpture soars like the boat's figurehead rising five metres high looking down on the town's main civic space, the Octagon.

Simon Wall said: "It's a very small project, makes a significant contemporary cultural statement, as to the continued relevance and vibrancy of rural Irish towns and their important contribution to the health of our nation. The investment and support of Mayo County Council and the RIAI in their provision of architectural resources, and the value that they have given to architecture and design, as major driving components for the survival and endorsement of rural Irish towns."

