

Irish Examiner

Cork library and square are people's choices at awards

Eoin English

Architects working in the public sector have been hailed after civic schemes scooped the top three awards in the popular vote section of Ireland's architecture Oscars.

The **Royal Institute of Architects** in Ireland (RIAI) announced the people's choice winners yesterday ahead of the unveiling in Dublin today of the full list of winners in its 2016 Irish Architecture Awards.

In the ninth year of the public choice section, the RIAI said it received over 14,000 votes for the short-listed schemes — the highest number in the history of the category.

The new square in Westport, Co Mayo, came out on top, while second and third place went to the new Hollyhill library on the northside of Cork City, and to Thomas Davis Square in Mallow in North Cork, respectively.

RIAI president Carole Pollard said they were delighted to see such an extraordinary and diverse range of projects entered into the awards scheme.

"This year we are particularly delighted to see public amenities and buildings — a public, social space, a library, and a town place — being recognised in Mayo and Cork," she said.

"These are spaces everyone can enjoy, interact with, and appreciate, and they demonstrate the wider contribution made by architects to our built environment."

The people's choice winner, the public space and sculpture in Westport, was commissioned by Westport Town Council to celebrate the town being named the best place to live in Ireland.

The sculpture, *The Sentinel* by artist Ronan Halpin, was selected following a national sculpture competition. The public space in which it is set was designed by Westport town architect Simon Wall, to celebrate the

sculpture and to integrate it into the townscape, while resolving a difficult junction between two streets.

The entire area has now become an important landmark and is used as a gathering point for public events and socialising.

The €4.1m Hollyhill Library, designed by Cork City Council's architect department to respond to a site alongside Terence MacSwiney Community College in an area designated a learning neighbourhood, was opened last July, and was a key element of a major urban regeneration programme in the suburb.

The 887sq m building includes The Lightwell exhibition space, a community room on the first floor with fantastic views over the city, and an outdoor seated plaza.

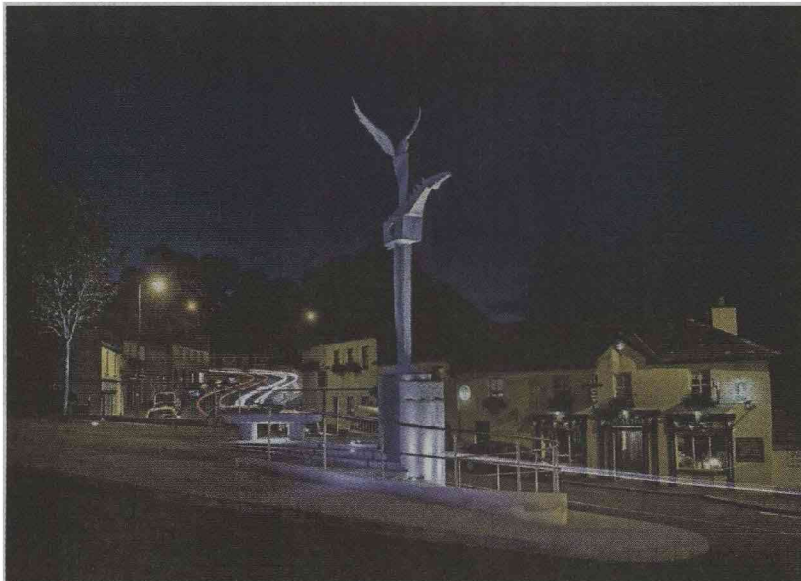
Thomas Davis Square in Mallow was designed by Mallow Town architect Giulia Vallone, and Cork County Council architect department, as part of phase one of the Mallow Urban Heritage Masterplan. A statue of Thomas Davis, the Mallow-born writer, patriot, and one of the founders of the Young Irelanders, forms the centrepiece of the pedestrianised plaza in the heart of the town centre.

The RIAI said it received 180 entries — the highest in five years — across all 17 areas, with 52 projects short-listed in categories including best commercial, best educational and best health building, best house, best housing and best house extension, best public building, best cultural project, best leisure, best public space/urban design, best international project, best sustainable project, best conservation, and best universal design.

There is also a new award for best fit-out and awards for best research and for the best emerging practice.

The awards are supported by Gerflor flooring, and the full list of winners across all 17 categories will be revealed at a ceremony at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham today.

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The Sentinel sculpture by Ronan Halpin, the centrepiece of the new square in Westport, which came out top of the RIAI people's choice award.

Picture: Michael McLaughlin



The €4.1m Hollyhill Library which opened last July as a key element of a major regeneration programme in the Cork suburb.



Thomas Davis Square in Mallow, which forms the centrepiece of the pedestrianised plaza in the heart of the town centre.