

## PRESS RELEASE

### **.IE Digital Town Awards 2023 Winners Announced at Gala Event** **Prize fund of €100,000 distributed to advance towns and communities' digital capabilities**

- Clonmel's Smart Skills Agri-Tech project wins Overall .IE Digital Town Award & €10,000 prize fund
- Killorglin's RDI Hub wins .IE Digital Business Award sponsored by Vodafone
- The .IE Digital Town Awards highlight the benefits and possibilities of digital and celebrates the digital achievements of towns and communities across Ireland
- Prize fund of €100,000 distributed across 10 digital innovation categories

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023:** .IE, the national registry for .ie domain names, today announced the winning entries for the **.IE Digital Town Awards 2023** at a Gala event held at the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone.

The awards were created by .IE in 2021, as part of a broader four-year €1 million investment in the .IE Digital Town Programme encouraging the uptake and use of internet and digital technologies for businesses, citizens and communities. The awards recognise and reward digitally inspired projects run by towns and local community groups. Each year the .IE Digital Town Awards offer a prize fund of €100,000 which is split across several categories.

The **.IE Agri-Tech award** was introduced for the first time this year and its inaugural winner, Clonmel's **Smart Skills for Farming Communities** was also named as the overall winner of the .IE Digital Town Awards 2023.

This year's category sponsors included Western Development Commission, Connected Hubs, and AIB Merchant Services with Vodafone as the overall presenting sponsor.

### **.IE Digital Town Awards Winners 2023:**

<b>.IE Agri-Tech Award Winner:</b> <i>overall winner</i>	Clonmel: Smart Skills for Farming Communities (Tipperary)
<b>.IE Digital Education Award Winner:</b>	Fingal: Weather Stations for Schools (Dublin)
<b>.IE Digital Tourism Award Winner:</b> <i>sponsored by AIB Merchant Services</i>	Dunlewey: Virtual Heritage Trail (Donegal)
<b>.IE Community Digital Award Winner:</b> <i>sponsored by the Western Development Commission</i>	Rossmore Scratchers (Tipperary)
<b>.IE Digital Business Award Winner:</b> <i>sponsored by Vodafone</i>	Killorglin's RDI Hub (Kerry)

<b>.IE Digital Sustainability Award Winner:</b>	Hollymount: Eco-Powered Cabinets for Defibrillators (Mayo)
<b>.IE Newcomer Award Winner:</b>	Portumna: Recording Family Histories (Galway)
<b>.IE Digital Rising Star Award:</b>	Drogheda: Drawda Urban Art Trail (Louth)
<b>.IE Digital Changemaker Award:</b> <i>sponsored by Connected Hubs</i>	Change Clothes Crumlin (Dublin)
<b>.IE Digital Local Hero Award:</b>	Clara Clarke, Blackrock Cycling without Age (Dublin)

The overall winner, Smart Skills for Farming Communities, helps farmers use new technologies to make their work easier, save time and money as well as improving the sustainability and profitability of their farm. The programme also delivers very practical digital training in areas such as soil fertility technology, grassland management technology, time and labour-saving technology, farm management systems, and handy Apps. The runner-up in the Agri-Tech category was the **Achonry Farmer's Market** from Sligo.

The **.IE Digital Sustainability award** was another new category introduced this year with Hollymount in Mayo announced as the winner with its **Eco-Powered Cabinets** which store life-saving equipment. The runner-up in this category was the **Open Litter Map** project which maps illegal dumping and aims to reduce it by showing the positive impact of litter-picking.

The **.IE Digital Business award, sponsored by Vodafone**, was won by **Killorglin's RDI Hub**. The hub was launched to facilitate the creation of new products, services and jobs in the South West region. It has transformed Kerry into a globally connected digital technology innovation, enterprise and skillset hotspot boosting economic growth. It runs numerous programmes including hackathons which resulted in Augmented Reality Apps for Kerry tourism; a STEM passport programme whose graduates gain a bonus of 50 Leaving Cert points; and ongoing supports for scaling companies to attract investment and create jobs.

In total, 22 town and community digital projects were recognised at this year's .IE Digital Town Awards 2023 – winners and runners-up across the seven main categories, three special category winners and one overall prize winner.

**Oonagh McCutcheon, National Director, .IE Digital Town Programme** said 'The quality of entries in this year's .IE Digital Town Awards has been incredibly impressive. Ireland's towns and communities are identifying and solving connectivity challenges, driving digital innovation and developing creative digital solutions to enhance the lives of their fellow citizens. This year 22 projects were recognised at the .IE Digital Town Awards Gala event, which add significantly to the lives of their local communities and improves our nation's digital footprint.'

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Neale Richmond** said "I want to congratulate all the winners of this year's .IE Digital Town Awards. The 22 groups honoured at this year's awards are great examples of how by embracing digitalisation, even small groups can make a big difference to their local communities, friends and neighbours. Congratulations again to all the winners, and thank you to every group that entered this year's awards."

Representing Vodafone, **Sinéad Bryan, Managing Director, Vodafone Business** said ‘At Vodafone, our goal is to be a connectivity and technology partner to our customers the length and breadth of Ireland. We are delighted to support the .IE Digital Town Awards 2023 which cements our commitment to powering inclusion through technology and enabling a better Ireland through use of digital.’

More information on the .IE Digital Town Awards can be found [here](#)

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The .IE Digital Towns Awards is an initiative of .IE, the national registry for .ie domain names.

Find out more at [www.weare.ie](http://www.weare.ie)

**ENDS**

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### **About .IE**

.IE is the national registry for .ie domain names and the trusted and progressive guardian of Ireland’s unique .ie online address. Our purpose is to enable and empower people, communities and businesses across Ireland to thrive online. In cooperation with our Registrars, technical partners and stakeholders, we help advance Ireland’s internet ecosystem.

At .IE we are committed to digital advocacy for local towns, communities and SMEs. Through stakeholder engagement initiatives such as [.IE Digital Town](#), we work with and support SME organisations to improve their members’ online presence and e-commerce capabilities so they can unlock the power of the internet to boost sales and productivity.

### **Notes for the Editor**

#### **.IE Digital Town Awards 2023 – Category Winners & Runners-up**

**.IE Digital Education Award Winner:**                      Fingal Weather Stations for Schools (Dublin)

Weather stations and rainfall gauges were distributed to 100 primary schools in Fingal to allow them collect real-time weather data. This data is then uploaded to Met Éireann’s weather observation website. One of the benefits is that more accurate and local data is gathered e.g. in relation to wind speeds and flooding. Over 1,000 pupils attended workshops showcasing the data that has been collected. The Environmental Protection Agency, and NASA in the US, host a live feed from Fingal schools on their websites. Putting technology in the hands of children helps them understand and engage with issues relating to climate change.

**.IE Digital Education Award Runner-up:**                      Carndonagh ‘Unleashing Digital Creativity’ (Donegal)

Young people in rural Donegal faced educational disadvantage. Spraoi agus Spórt, a social enterprise, opened the Digital Creative Lab where young people use digital fabrication to bring their ideas and creativity to life. This shows them what digital skills, design entrepreneurship and engineering can offer for their future. It has been rolled out

across national and secondary schools in the county and there are high hopes for the contribution of STEM to future job opportunities.

**.IE Digital Tourism Award Winner:** Dunlewey Digital History and Heritage (Donegal)  
*sponsored by AIB Merchant Services*

Dunlewey developed a digital project to showcase the history and heritage of the village and surrounding area. Key points of interest were identified for a heritage trail. It used storymaps, online exhibitions, online heritage trails and interactive maps. The oral tradition of older people and local farmers was captured - including names of places, lakes and fields - and recorded for future generations. Original records such as school registration books, were photographed and digital books created. Virtual tours of the local landscape were created. Digital has allowed the story of Dunlewey to be shared with locals and visitors alike.

**.IE Digital Tourism Award Runner-up:** The Maria Edgeworth Centre (Longford)  
*sponsored by AIB Merchant Services*

The Edgeworth family were respected educationalists, inventors, writers and supporters of social change who hosted famous visitors such as Sir Walter Scott and William Wordsworth amongst others. A museum dedicated to Maria Edgeworth contains many interesting artefacts which have now been digitised with the help of the Bodleian Library & National Library of Ireland, as part of the digital strategy to bring the museum to a wider audience. A new website was developed, social media accounts set up, interactive digital blackboards installed, a POS system developed and training in design software provided. The Maria Edgeworth museum enters the digital age!

**.IE Community Digital Award Winner:** Rossmore Scratchers Rural Connectivity (Tipperary)  
*sponsored by the Western Development Commission*

The installation of a Broadband Connection Point (BCP) was a game changer for Rossmore. It enabled Rossmore Scratchers, a coding club, to provide a space for digital projects through STEAM for children and adults alike. It is volunteer-led, has diverse community involvement, a clear understanding of community needs, all of which is managed on a limited budget. A great example of a community being given the digital tools, and taking it from there.

**.IE Community Digital Award Runner-up:** Turn2Me suicide charity (Nationwide)  
*sponsored by the Western Development Commission*

Turn2Me offers counselling and peer support through a fully online, digital platform. All services are provided for free which is only made possible because of the digital nature of the service. Barriers such as cost, waiting lists and travel time were all removed by using the digital platform. Turn2Me helps 6,000 people annually.

**.IE Digital Business Award Winner:** Killorglin RDI Hub Digital Business (Kerry)  
*sponsored by Vodafone*

The RDI hub was launched to facilitate the creation of new products, services and jobs in the South West region. It has transformed Kerry into a globally connected digital technology innovation, enterprise and skillset hotspot boosting economic growth. It runs numerous programmes including hackathons which resulted in Augmented Reality Apps for Kerry tourism; a STEM passport programme whose graduates gain a 50 Leaving Cert bonus; and ongoing supports for scaling companies to attract investment and create jobs.

**.IE Digital Business Award Runner-up:** Castlebar Foodie Save (Mayo)  
*sponsored by Vodafone*

Foodie Save is a mobile App which aims to reduce food waste. It connects the public with local businesses who wish to sell the food they have left over at the end of the day. It is a mutually beneficial service because the food products are sold at a discounted price. The App makes it as simple as click – swipe – collect. They are looking to add a gamification rewards feature to the App which will reward users and it incorporate preventative food wasting tips in an interactive way. Foodie Save aims to operate in all small – medium towns across Ireland within the next 3 years.

**.IE Agri-Tech Award Winner:** Smart Skills for Farming Communities (Clonmel)

This programme was developed to help farmers use new technologies to make their work easier, save time and money as well as improving the sustainability and profitability of their farm. 60% of farmers report that there are barriers to digital training and supports. This project addresses that problem by providing very practical digital training in areas such as soil fertility technology; grassland management technology; tech for time and labour saving; and farm management systems and useful Apps. This project addresses the digital skills gap amongst

farmers and helps them access digital technologies that hold the key for a smarter, more competitive and resource-efficient agricultural sector.

**.IE Agri-Tech Award Runner-up:** Achonry Farmer's Market (Sligo)

The GAA club at Achonry, Co Sligo developed a farmer's market as a way to provide a safe outdoor outlet for community social interaction and to raise funds for community facilities. The project has been a great success, attracting a loyal following from traders, shoppers and neighbours. They made extensive use of social media, their website, and online platforms like TripAdvisor and Google to promote the market. Their Facebook page has WhatsApp integration which allows customers reserve products from a stall – effectively a 'click and collect' service. Mobile payments are taken through SumUp. The market provides a vital social outlet and loyal customers volunteer to write blogs about their purchases, which in turn promotes the opportunity for off-farm income generation.

**.IE Digital Sustainability Award Winner:** Hollymount's eco-powered cabinets (Mayo)

The two eco-powered cabinets have been installed on Croagh Patrick to securely store defibrillators and life-saving medications to treat cardiac arrests. The cabinets are powered by solar energy so they don't require a main power supply and can be seen from up to 6 miles away via an infrared LED light. Heat sensors are used to monitor temperature levels which are transmitted in real-time to a mobile device. The cabinets have geolocation capability which is vital for emergency services.

**.IE Digital Sustainability Award Runner-up:** OpenLitterMap (Cork)

This project maps illegal dumping and aims to reduce it by showing the positive impact of litter-picking. The tidy towns' teams use the App which allows them tag litter into over 130 categories. Researchers can then identify the biggest causes of litter, including that by corporate brands. It provides a digital tool that can visualise litter problems within the local and wider community. It helps interested companies fulfil their ESG commitments in a meaningful way for example, allowing staff time off to engage in litter-picking activities. The tool uses AI to make data collection easier and Artificial Reality – similar to Pokemon Go, for visualisation.

**.IE Newcomer Award Winner:** Portumna Recording Family Histories (Galway)

An App named StoryWell is in development. It will give the gift of stories to future generations using an intuitive, interactive interface. It will help families capture their best memories, experiences, customs and traditions so they can be enjoyed by future generations. Some of the key features of the App are the ability to record; a transcription tool; the ability to upload photos and videos; social media integration; tagging files for easy retrieval; and the ability to create playlists and a mapping tool.

**.IE Newcomer Award Runner Up:** Digital Engagement App for Ireland Historic Town Centres (Kilkenny)

A digital mapping App showcases the layers of built and spatial data for Kilkenny. It combines the city's fragmented geospatial data into an easy-to-use digital platform. #EngageKilkenny is a digital, public platform which enables engagement with Kilkenny's historic core. An inter-generational oral history component is planned, along with the ability for people to upload rich social history information.

**.IE Digital Rising Star Award Winner:** Drogheda Drawda Urban Art Trail (Louth)

Drawda Urban Art Trail was developed to reinvigorate lesser visited spaces in the town with public art, bringing to life stories of characters from mythology. The murals and art installations are promoted through the use of QR codes, audio trails, digital maps and brochures as well as on social media and websites of partner organisations. To ensure longevity of the project and provide a behind-the-scenes view, videos recordings of the 'making of the murals' were published on YouTube.

**.IE Changemaker Award Winner:** Crumlin Clothes Exchange (Dublin)  
*Sponsored by Connected Hubs*

Change Clothes Dublin is a clothes-swapping initiative to promote sustainable clothing solutions. This includes re-learning skills such as mending, sewing and upcycling. A local group, Connecting Crumlin's Community, provided seed funding for the initiative. The investment was used to build a website which includes an events booking and equipment hire feature. They are using social media to build awareness and also use personalised email marketing. Preventing over 32 tonnes of carbon emissions, this local revolution has the ability to make a big impact.

**.IE Local Hero Award Winner:** Clara Clarke, Blackrock Cycling Without Age (Dublin)

Cycling without Age (CWA) is a sustainable, voluntary initiative using specially designed trishaws to take people unable to cycle for free, slow-cycling spins, piloted by volunteer pilots. Clara Clark brought Cycling Without Age to Ireland in 2017 and since then has spent countless hours promoting and developing the organisation so that it can provide senior citizens and those with disabilities the opportunity to experience the joy and freedom of cycling. Cycle tours are booked online. Aged 71; Clara remains passionate about Cycling Without Age and determined to see it grow.

## **.IE Digital Town Awards 2023 – Commended Projects**

**.IE Sustainability Category:** Tinahely, The Bee Sanctuary (Wicklow)

This bee sanctuary was set up to tackle the biodiversity crisis and raise awareness of the current threats to bees. The website has a booking feature for farm tours. With clever use of Twitter hashtags the bee sanctuary has reached a global audience. Now featuring in the Metaverse, they continue to educate the public on sustainability practices. In 5 years, they have gone from a 'bricks and mortar' project advocating for bees and nature locally to a digitally focused project with international reach.

**.IE Community Category:** Foxford, Interactive, digital games designed for seniors living with cognitive impairment (Mayo)

Purposeful play including puzzles, quizzes and arts and crafts contributes to a positive quality of life. This is provided through the digital tool Tover Table, a virtual table that is controlled by an overhead projector and can include up to six participants at once. It stimulates brain activity and support workers can keep a record of cognitive improvements for their residents. To date, over 40 families in Foxford have been helped by this service.

**.IE Education Category:** Skibbereen, Training workforce returnees (Cork)

This is a digital skills training programme for workforce returnees, usually women who have taken career leave for family reasons, to re-enter local and remote employment. The key focus is on ICT and digital literacy as well as networking, communications and team-building. Training is delivered in workshops and content is available through the Learning Management System (LMS). The programme addresses the often unseen cohort of latent talent that can contribute to the economy with the right up-skilling.

**.IE Education Category:** Tallaght, 'The Positive Vibes Movement' (Dublin)

The Positive Vibes Movement celebrates youth through creativity, art, poetry and music. Once created, the original pieces are uploaded to a digital platform and sold as NFTs. Through the 'Give One Gift One' programme, there is a charitable element, helping to support children and youth across a range of countries and causes. Small actions with big impact.

**.IE Newcomer Category:** Ardara, Decreasing Isolation – Increasing Connectedness (Donegal)

After broadband was installed in the sheltered housing complex in 2022, all 29 apartments and the public areas were provided with a smart screen/speaker Amazon Echo. This has opened a world of opportunity to residents, particularly as it uses voice activated technology which is easier for older residents than typing. Residents use it for viewing funerals, weddings and church services online; to set reminders from the mundane to the important – from watering flowers to medication times; creating shopping lists; and making video calls or participating in an online singing circle. Residents are delighted with the new world digital has opened up for them.