

West Limerick

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Leaving a trail of honours at awards in France

THE team behind the development of west Limerick's Great Southern Trail (GST) have been honoured for their dedication to the project at a gala awards banquet in France.

The voluntary group received the special jury prize at the 2011 European Greenways Awards on Thursday last in recognition of their commitment to the project, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

The local project competed against 20 entrants from around Europe in the prestigious competition, eight of whom received awards at Thursday's ceremony in the Vosges city of Epinal.

In the 'excellence' category, the GST received the special prize of the jury, behind the top three overall winners.

According to the judges, the award was presented to the west Limerick project 'in recognition of the efforts made for the



Great Southern Trails chairman, Liam O'Mahony.

last 20 years by the volunteer enthusiasts of the GST who, with their tireless endeavour, have succeeded in making a reality

the conversion of a disused railway line into a Greenway to be enjoyed by all.'

The fifth European

Greenways Awards contribute to the promotion of best practices in greenways. It encourages the qualitative development of these facilities opened to the general public in Europe.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Great Southern Trail is a unique 53 mile stretch of countryside in West Limerick/North Kerry, encompassing routes from (Newcastle West to Barnagh, Barnagh to Abbeyfeale, Newcastle West to Ardagh and Ardagh to Rathkeale. It is the route taken by the Limerick - Tralee railway line, which opened in 1867/1880 and closed in 1975/1977.

It has been painstakingly transformed into a walk/cycle way over the past 20 years by the voluntary GST action group, whose primary aim is to develop the Limerick to Tralee section of the trail so that everyone can explore the region.