

The picturesque village of Clonegal, Co. Carlow has a new resident - one who has a very distinct look. Its arms are conveyor rollers from a quarry; its feet are the bucket teeth from a digger. It has bolts for fingers and an engine for a stomach. Its eyebrows are wire brushes, its hair comprises motorbike chains and its cheery smile is thanks to the roller from a conveyor belt.

This smiling metal man, who carries a suitcase, is completely made from recycled scrap parts and was created by Liam Birmingham, a second-year mechanical engineering student from Institute of Technology Carlow. And on Wednesday 13th June Liam, alongside his engineering lecturers Dr. Anthony Nolan and Dr. Cathal Nolan, presented the smiling 'Tin Man' to the Clonegal Tidy Towns committee. He will reside in the square opposite the church in Clonegal village where his suitcase will store used batteries as part of Clonegal's ongoing efforts to "reduce, reuse and recycle".

This unusual project is a result of community collaboration between Clonegal Tidy Towns Association and Institute of Technology Carlow. Clonegal has a very active committee who approached the Institute for an innovative idea to drive this year's Tidy Towns campaign. Noting the lack of a battery recycling facility in the village, the mechanical engineering department conceived the idea of a 'robot' carrying a suitcase into which the local school children could discard used batteries. Project supervisor, Dr Anthony Nolan, a lecturer from the mechanical engineering department of Institute of Technology Carlow, suggested the idea as an end-of-year project to second-year student Liam Birmingham, who agreed – provided all the parts could be recycled from old engines and machine parts.

"The project took me three months and I spent plenty of evenings and Saturdays looking in scrap yards. I'd like to thank Hudson Bros Quarry in Blessington for their help and patience", commented Liam, who is from Baltinglass. Dr Anthony Nolan added "We hope that this will encourage children to recycle and see that there are many different uses for old machines"

Head of the Department of Aerospace, Mechanical & Electronic Engineering at Institute of Technology Carlow, Dr Cathal Nolan commented "Institute of Technology Carlow is committed to connecting with communities in the region and we hope that the sight of Clonegal's newest resident will inspire local children to consider engineering as a career"

Metal man has taken residence and will not be without a name before long. The Tidy Towns committee plan on running a competition for the local school children to 'name the robot'. Chairman of Clonegal Tidy Town committee, Johnny Dunne, who received Clonegal's newest resident yesterday commented, "This is a great recycling facility for the local school children and we are delighted that Institute of Technology Carlow came forward with such a unique project. Liam did a fantastic job and we are very grateful. And hopefully this unique project will help increase the village score in this year's Tidy Town and Pride of Place campaigns."

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For reference: Alma Feeley, Communications Office, Institute of Technology Carlow

E: alma. feeley@itcarlow.ie

M: 087 8204934