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Good Luck to Participants in the **Clare Business Excellence Awards**

Clare Business Excellence Awards 2026: Finalists are announced

THE finalists of the 2026 Clare Business Excellence Awards have been announced.

The Clare Business Excellence Awards hosted by Ennis Chamber in partnership with Clare County Council, once again attracted high calibre entries from every corner of County Clare. The shortlist of finalists was announced at a soapbox breakfast hosted by Ennis Chamber at the Old Ground Hotel, Ennis.

Amongst the businesses shortlisted included former category winners, Wix & Wax Ireland, BEO - The Well, Doolin Ferry Company, amongst many others.

Ennis Chamber President Frank Holly, owner of Holly's Vital Pharmacy on Abbey Street in Ennis, said, "It's no mean feat to make it through as a finalist this year because the competition was red hot."

"We were delighted to receive our adjudicators' results yesterday, to see that this year's line-up features a range of businesses from small and medium to large, representing a host of sectors".

The Awards Gala promises to be a lively event. It will take place on Thursday, November 19th at The Rine Hotel. The MC is stand-up comedian and author Colm O'Regan.

The Categories and Finalists for 2026 are:



● **ALL SMILES:** Frank Holly, President of Ennis Chamber, with Stephen Keogh, Managing Partner MHP Sellors, sponsors of Best Family Business category, with finalists from that category - Mary and Roisin Wynne of Route 85 Drive Thru Coffee in Inagh

Best Green & Sustainable Practices (Sponsored by Rengen Power)

Burren Beef & Farm Experience
Cahir Environmental Services (CES)
Dromoland Castle Holdings
Shannon Estuary Way Retreat and Academy

Best Micro Business (Sponsored by Clare Local Enterprise Office)

Berka Solutions
Borrow a Geek

Professional Services (Sponsored by Bank of Ireland)

AMQ Accountants & Auditors
Honan Financial Services
Little Rock Digital Marketing
TFI Local Link

Lyons Garages
Wix & Wax Ireland

Best Family Business (Sponsored by MHP Sellors)

Caherconnell Stone Fort & Sheep-dog Demonstrations
Cassidy's Pub & Restaurant
Route 85
Western Herd Brewery

Best New Business (Sponsored by Tierney's)

Afterschool Adventures
BEO - The Well
Green Impact Sustainability Consulting
IPERA

Best SME (Sponsored by CupPrint)

Advanced Technical Concepts (ATC)
Cahir Environmental Services (CES)
Fitzgerald Energy Solutions

Best use of Digital Marketing/Social Media (Sponsored by The Clare Echo)

Cruises Bar
Doolin Ferry Company
My First Steps
Peaceful Paws

Business for Social Impact (Sponsored by Essilor Luxottica)

Employability Clare
St Francis Credit Union
Zimmer Biomet

Innovation in Business (Sponsored by PTSB)

Aviation Digital Partners
Torpey
Zuhause Gesund

Best Hospitality (Sponsored by The Shannon Airport Group)

The Rine
TIGL Hotel (Doonbeg)
Shannon Springs

Best Tourism Experience (Sponsored by TUS)

Doolin Ferry Company
Aillwee Burren Experience
Shannon Aviation Museum
Doolin Cave

Best Place to Eat (restaurant) - (Sponsored by AIB)

Gate 96 (Ennis)
The Harbour Restaurant (Kilrush)
Town Hall (Ennis)

Best Place to Eat (Café) - (Sponsored by AIB)

Beag (Kilrush)
Dodi (Lahinch)
Le Chéile (Barefield)

Best Retailer - (Sponsored by Clean Ireland Recycling)

Aillwee - The Farm Shop
County Boutique
My First Steps
Torpey

Customer Service Excellence - (Sponsored by Xeinaadin)

O'Connor's (O'Connell Street)
Peaceful Paws
St. Francis Credit Union
TFI Local Link

60 seconds... with Liam O'Brien

Ahead of the Clare Business Excellence Awards, we put the spotlight on local business. This week it's the boss at Doolin Ferry

When you were smaller, what did you want to be when you grow up?
I wanted to be a sea captain and work on the Doolin ferry

Tell us about your career progression today?
I started working in my father's company at an extremely young age! I then trained as a captain and progressed to management of the business and then eventually owner with my wife Erin

What's the most enjoyable aspect of what you do?
I love the sea. And I really like meeting people from all over the world every day.

What motivates you?
I am motivated by improvement. I strive to improve our service offering every year. I want to get to a point where I



provide the best ferry service in the world.

What advice do you have for your 15-year-old self?
Don't try and do everything

yourself thinking you are saving a wage. It will only end up costing you more in the long run.

If you weren't in this job, what do you think you'd be doing now?
I don't know... I like anything mechanical but I also like transport and hospitality.

What's your greatest life or career achievement to date?
Organising the building of our own new vessels from scratch in Turkey.

Who or what is the biggest influence on your life?
Mears

What's the life dream now?
That my family remain healthy and get to live a happy and long life.

How do you switch off?
I struggle to switch off and probably never do. I am constantly thinking of what my next move is, and then also will my wife allow me to do it!

When are you at your happiest?
Spending time with my wife and 4 kids and also - watching people getting on and off the boats on a sunny calm day in Doolin.

Do you have any hidden talents?
Absolutely none!

What might we be surprised to know about you?
I have got seasick on 2 occasions!

Anything else that you'd like to share? No

FACT FILE

Position: Owner, Doolin Ferry
Age: 44
Lives: Kilfenora
Family: Four children
Favourite holiday ever: Disney with the kids
Favourite album: Renegade or Live and Dangerous by Thin Lizzy.
Favourite thing about Clare: The coast / Atlantic
Favourite TV series: The Sopranos

