LIMERICK Civic Trust will shortly be erecting a new bridge at the Plassy end of the city canal which will enable people to walk along the bank of the river from Corbally to Killaloe, if they so desire.

Confirmation of the erection of the new bridge was made by Pat Moriarty, chairman of the trust at a function organised by Mayor Jim Kemmy to honour the achievement of the group in winning the infrastructural award for the canal project in the national Community Initiative Awards, sponsored by FAS.

The Civic Trust are the first group from the region to ever win a national FAS award in any of the four categories.

The trust with the help of 31 FAS workers cleaned up the canal house and part of the waterway which was closed in the early 1960’s when Guinness and other major carriers started to use trains and trucks to bring their goods to Limerick.

The Civic Trust won £3,500 with the award. “With this money we are going to erect a safety rail-

ing around Lock Quay, which is North of Baal’s Bridge,” explained Denis Leonard, director of Civic Trust.

At the function at City Hall, Civic Trust chairman Pat Moriarty revealed that as a direct spin-off from the canal project they received substantial sponsorship from Guinness Ireland towards the erection of the pedestrian bridge.

“We have applied for planning permission and hope if it is granted, we could open the bridge during Civic Week next year,” he confirmed.

The trust chairman said that he looked on the national award as recognition of their endeavours, not just in the canal project, but in the very many other endeavours they undertook over the past 11 years.

He paid special tribute to Phil Duggan and Maurice Johnston of FAS and architect John McMahon, and Denis Leonard and Des Cowhey who managed the scheme.

Mayor Jim Kemmy explained that the FAS awards were designed to recognise the contribution of local communities to projects carried out under the various employment schemes and training programs.

“A total of 37 community groups in the Mid-West, 11 of whom were from Limerick city, submitted projects covering a wide range of innovative activi-

ties. They competed for national awards in four categories from Community Enterprise award to the community services award, heritage and arts award and the infrastructural award,” explained Mayor Kemmy.

Limerick Civic Trust were winners in the infrastructural group but at regional and national level.

Mr Phil Duggan, regional director of FAS explained that this was the first time a group from the region had won a national award.

“The Lock Quay Canal Restoration Project clearly impressed the national adjudicators as indeed it would impress anybody who had seen the before-and-after photographs,” said Mr Duggan.

He revealed that there were approximately 350 FAS-sponsored projects running in the region. “They continue to make a major contribution to the economic and social development of every area and parish in the region,” he added.

Mr Duggan said that the projects took many forms such as the construction of community halls, the restoration of historical buildings to the provision of tourism infrastructure.

“The Limerick Civic Trust project was based on a FAS Community Employment scheme employing 21 people,” he added.

He explained that the Community Employment scheme was a successor to the Social Employment Scheme and both were designed to give work experience for one year to the long term unemployed with a view to enhancing their job prospects.

“It is vital that a person who has been unemployed for more than 12 months should maintain contact with the world of work. This objective was achieved through FAS funding Community groups who had local projects to be carried out.

“The Community groups in turn employ an agreed number of C.E. workers to do the agreed programmes of work. Somebody had coined the phrase “Fas workers” in referring to C.E. Workers. This is not correct as they are employed by the Community groups sponsoring the projects. C.E. participants are generally employed for a 12 month period.

This is to ensure that they work opportunities are spread widely to as many long term unemployed as possible,” said Mr Duggan.

He said that the main difference between the Community Employment scheme and the former SES scheme was the training or development element which was now an integral part of the community employment.