THE success of the recent Heart of Castlebar Festival has clearly shown how a pooling of resources and ideas can bring the entire community together for the economic benefit of all.

Catherine Brennan spearheaded the drive with the assistance of Castlebar Town Council, Gnó Maigh Eo, Visit Castlebar and the local Chamber of Commerce.

The three-day event culminated with the official opening by Taoiseach Enda Kenny of the new multi-million euro streetscape development on Ellison Street, Main Street, Linenhall Street and Castle Street.

While there was some concern at the duration of the works, the end results are a credit to the design team, the contractors and all concerned with the scheme.

Town manager Mr. Seamus Granahan must be complimented for his foresight in driving the project to completion.

The tree-lined boulevard now makes the town centre most attractive and will surely come into its own when illuminated at Christmas.

Up to 7,000 shoppers crammed into the town centre for the final day of the festival, giving it an air of a real market town. The various stalls added to the colour and atmosphere.

The fact the weather was glorious added to the occasion, as did the many musical interludes that entertained the shoppers on the final day.

Now the challenge is to follow on the success of the festival. During the summer months it would be great to stage the festival with the food stalls on a weekly basis.

This could involve the regular stallholders who trade on Market Square on a Friday as well as

inviting participants from other towns to show off their culinary wares.

Likewise, a Christmas market would be a novel event and could be staged on several weekends leading up to December 25.

The streetscape certainly lends itself to a market setting with plenty of room and only requiring the closing of Main Street to facilitate the events.

The overall goodwill created by the festival should not be wasted but instead built on to create even better festivals in the future.

The spin-off is good for the commercial sector and also boosts the image of Castlebar as a place to visit and shop.

The orgainsing committee showed great courage in tackling such a project in these recessionary times.

But such courage is needed to overcome the economic slump and they surely showed how a coming together can benefit all.

Well done to all concerned.