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Hanly backs campaign for arts and trade centre

By JESSICA QUINN

BROADCASTER David Hanly is helping lead a campaign for a new 350-seater, arts, trade and commerce centre for the city.

Plans for the new centre facing the river at Arthur's Quay Park were revealed at the weekend. The centre's design includes a 350-seater auditorium, roof and contemplation gardens, gallery and space

for an orchestra.

The design for the project was unveiled by Hugh Murray of Murray O'Laoire architects at a public meeting in Jurys hotel.

The centre is hoped to be completed within the next five years at a cost of over £10 million.

Lending their support to the project at the meeting were David O'Mahony, president of Limerick Chamber of Commerce; David Hanly, broadcaster;

Brendan Keating, city manager; Alice Kennelly, manager Island Theatre Company; Liz Culloty, manager Belltable and Kevin Thompstone, chief executive, Shannon Development.

Launching the proposal, RTE broadcaster and Limerickman David Hanly said: "Limerick is a changed place since I left here 40 years ago. The city does need this. This is only the first step and it is a small

beginning and there will be a lot of hard work ahead, but it will be worth it."

The campaign to provide the centre was partly inspired by the impending closure of the Belltable Arts Centre in November 2002. The plans revealed this weekend concentrated on the arts centre, however the planned centre will also incorporate the business community of Limerick.

According to Mr O'Mahony the campaign is not just about giving the city an arts centre, but about giving Limerick a heart.

"Limerick needs a building that will represent civic pride and will facilitate many of the services that we are unable to provide in the city.

"There has been too much focus on an arts only centre in the city over the last two or three years. This new

centre is a very viable proposition and it would be a good marriage benefiting the business, trade and arts sector.

"At the moment there isn't a focal point in Limerick and the arts, trade and commerce centre would be a major focal point for the heart of our vibrant city.

"This project will pull all the elements together and will be something to transcend all barriers."