

City Council urged to act to save our Georgian heritage

By ANNE SHERIDAN

THE Knight of Glin and president of the Irish Georgian Society, Desmond Fitzgerald, has called on Limerick City Council to introduce tax incentives in Limerick's Georgian area to prevent the further decline of the city's historic buildings.

The President of the Irish Georgian Society, who recently submitted a comprehensive report to the city council to regenerate these areas, has also spoken out on the need for a conservation and heritage officer to be employed by the city council.

"I really wish they would sit up and take notice. We've gone to a lot of trouble and put together a pretty vigorous report, which now needs action," the Knight of Glin told the Limerick Leader this week.

Mr Fitzgerald said he "can't imagine" why it has taken the city council so long to request their submissions for improving Limerick's Georgian areas.

"If you walk the streets you will see what a depressing state it's in. The city council should take stock of that part of the town - the rest of the city has improved greatly through tax incentives. We now need a new vision and new purpose for our Georgian area, which is the second finest in the country," he said.

He added that the lack of a heritage or conservation officer to oversee the



The rundown Catherine Street area of the city, which contains many historic Georgian buildings

planned regeneration for the area is "a regrettable feature of Limerick".

Ms Fitzgerald's comments this week follow a submission made by the society, in association with its Limerick chapter, to the city council for consideration in its city centre strategy report, which is to be published this October.

The six-page report states that given the scale of investment required to regenerate Newtown Pery, "a big vision", as well as major funding and other taxation incentives, is required to reverse the deterioration of the area.

Donough Cahill, deputy director of Irish Georgian Society, said funding should be provided on multiple levels, but greater use of the 'Living over the Shop' scheme and the advancement of the Business Improvement District initiative

will provide "a catalyst for urban regeneration".

The society has consequently called on the city council to give this area official status in the city centre strategy report as an area of special historical, architectural and tourism interest.

Describing Limerick as "architecturally and scenically one of Ireland's outstanding historic cities", the society said the regeneration of its Georgian core "will require wide support and commitment from the city council and from all relevant stakeholders".

Another member of the Irish Georgian Society, UK resident Derrick Fawsitt, told this newspaper that he was appalled by the state of the city's Georgian buildings during a recent visit.

Mr Fawsitt, who owns one of the famous Georgian buildings in

Dublin's Fitzwilliam Square, said he has always regarded Limerick's Georgian buildings as the best outside of Dublin, but said he was shocked to discover that "they seem to have been let go to rack and ruin".

"My criticism is purely constructive and comes from my genuine love of Georgian splendour and indeed my nostalgia for Limerick," said Mr Fawsitt.

He added that the city fathers should be ashamed that these buildings have been forgotten about and said he is continually annoyed by reports in various newspapers of new multi-million euro developments in the city, while "your heritage is falling down".

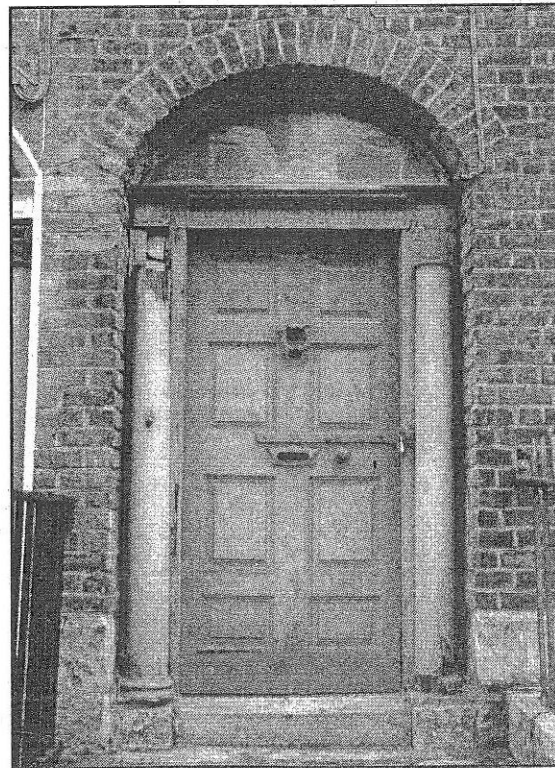
He pointed to the modern residential developments on the quays, which he said are "horrible both in colour and

design, all on the banks of one of the most beautiful rivers in Europe".

The area of Newtown Pery was laid out in the 1760s as a new urban quarter on a grid plan devised by the Italian architect Davis Ducart.

The classically-inspired new town was subdivided and leased to developers who built up their plots during the later 18th and early 19th centuries. However, the report notes that "having reached its commercial and social pinnacle in the mid-19th century, Newtown Pery began a period of long-term economic decline and physical deterioration".

A draft copy of the city centre strategy issues paper gives a commitment by the city council to protect more than 500 listed buildings in the city under the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.



Top, the Knight of Glin, Dr Desmond Fitzgerald speaking at the Georgian Limerick Conference at the Limerick City Hall
And a decaying Georgian building in the city

Waterford retreat aims to 're-evangelise' Limerick youth

By MAIRÉAD O'DONNELL

LIMERICK youths are among the thousands of young Catholics ready to listen to God's word at next month's weekend retreat in Waterford.

Young people from all over the county will join an estimated 300 other youths in Mount Mellery, Co Waterford next month for what is set to be the largest ever Youth 2000 (Y2K) regional weekend retreat.

Running from Friday evening, September 7 to Sunday afternoon, September 9, the retreat will, according to the organisers, see young people return to their faith and find peace while listening to the word of God in the comfort and solidarity of their peers.

"Youth 2000 is youth leading youth to the heart of the church," explains David Lyons, the association's Munster regional leader.

"Through a programme of retreats, weekly prayer meetings and other spiritual events, Youth 2000 has taken up the challenge to re-evangelise young people. The retreat in Mount Mellery in September is open to all young people aged 16-35 and focuses on reuniting people with God their Father.

"The theme of this retreat is 'Are You Listening?' which comes from the gospel of that weekend, Luke 14: 25-33. There will be an atmosphere of joy, celebration and enthusiasm

The retreat will begin with registration on Friday evening at 6.30pm followed by an introduction and the rosary. Saturday will see things start off at 8am with morning prayer followed by a day of prayer, talks, share groups, workshops, mass, a talk on the sacrament of reconciliation, confessions and a healing service. Sunday will see the retreat conclude at 3.30pm with mass after a day of prayer, share groups and talks.

"The small group talks and workshops are organised to give participants an opportunity to meet with other young people, make new friends and talk over the topics of discussion," continued Mr Lyons.

"The retreats are a great opportunity for young people to make friends with like-minded individuals, to discuss matters that they battle with and to realise they are not alone. It is a relaxed and friendly place where people can be themselves and live their faith without fear of reproach from others."

The retreat will be held in the scout centre in Mount Mellery and while there is no fee required, patrons will be asked to donate whatever they can afford. All meals and accommodation are provided and people are advised to book online to secure a place.

The last retreat held in Ireland was at Knock, Co Mayo in July of this year saw over 1,000 young people travel from all over the country. The retreat in Mount Mellery is the