

THE PRIDE OF LIMERICK

THE LAUNCHING this Thursday by Limerick Image Project Committee of a civic trust for the city represents an imaginative advance for the North Munster capital.

For decades the Limerick streetscape was allowed to deteriorate. Georgian facades were thoughtlessly disfigured by property developers. Derelict sites prompted unfavourable comparison even with wartime Coventry.

The nadir of this Dark Age was heralded perhaps by the collapse of part of Patrick Street – ironically enough, just across the road from the Town Hall. The well-meaning Corporation, starved of cash and hamstrung by red tape, had seemed unable to arrest the environmental decline. But the appearance of such an eyesore so close to home evidently strengthened the local authority's resolve.

Improvements came slowly but surely. Waste ground was gradually cleared and resurfaced for car parking. Grass replaced rubble.

Private and public agencies accelerated redevelopment of the inner city. Shannon Development joined the Corporation in urban renewal, with admirable effect.

Meanwhile, community consciousness of the need to spruce up the city was progressively heightened. Again, words were matched by deeds. Limerick Image Project Committee, comprising organisations dedicated to the conservation and improvement of the environment, was formed.

Members of this group have spent two years preparing for the civic trust which will channel international funds to facelift schemes. They deserve the highest commendation. And the rest of us in this, the most self-critical community in the country, might allow ourselves to take a bow for once.

For the launching of the civic trust, which would have been futile in the face of the old apathy that once characterised public opinion in city and county – is a sure sign that at long last we have rediscovered our civic pride.