

# What should happen now to the permanent TSB building?

CHANGE is certainly afoot in the city's landscape as a result of changing business patterns.

Roches Stores will transform into Debenhams this month after over 40 years of trading on O'Connell Street, and the Permanent TSB Bank on Glentworth Street will close its doors this Friday after 170 years.

Acting manager of the TSB branch, Geraldine Creamer, summed up the situation: "We are all leaving the old world behind and moving on to the new," she said.

Few banks have managed to capture the heart of their customers, but the Stone Jug or Penny Bank as it is affectionately known to the people of Limerick, has succeeded in doing that.

Among its clients during the last century were the Young Irishmen, Fenians and the Parnellites. Ms Creamer also noted that the late Limerick politician Jim Kemmy was a proud member of the bank throughout his life.

"It really was a working man's bank as there was a ceiling for how much you could lodge in one year," she said. The rules of 1869 laid down that the bank could not receive from a depositor "any sum or sums exceeding thirty pounds a year, with a ceiling of £150 in any one account."

And the staff are genuinely saddened by the move. "It was always a much loved bank and will be a sad day for all the staff here. Up until the 1970s

we didn't even have telephones in the bank. It has come a long way and Limerick has grown with it," said Ms Creamer. To mark the momentous occasion the bank will be giving out champagne and chocolates to all their customers on the day as a thank-you for their business throughout the years. One of the banks most loyal customers, 77 year-old Willie Grimes of Sexton Street, will receive a special gift on the day.

But the future of Limerick's oldest bank currently remains undecided.

Acting manager of the branch, Geraldine Creamer, said she was extremely disappointed and saddened that the branch was moving out to Dooradoyle. "People often presume that it was a church before it became a bank," she said.

The question on everyone's lips is now when will the building be sold, to whom and for what purpose?

"I'd love to see a museum or a theatre or an arts centre. The building would lend itself to something like that. But not a nightclub or a pub," said Ms Creamer.

And former Mayor of Limerick, Cllr Diarmuid Scully also hopes the premises will be used for cultural purposes rather than commercial ventures. He suggests the viability of a sports museum or new library as much needed projects to

enhance the city.

"I think we need to examine that possibility because it is such a beautiful building and it's a superb location. Obviously, a commercial enterprise is more likely but we have no shortage of restaurants, bars or nightclubs in the city," said Cllr Scully.

On the streets of Limerick people unanimously believed that the building has to be used culturally rather than for commercial interests.

Besides an art gallery, a museum and a theatre, some of the more interesting suggestions were a gay nightclub, a homeless shelter, an animal refuge, a music centre and Scully's aforementioned sports museum was also highly rated among the people.

But the possibility of any nightclub or bar was mooted on the grounds that the steps leading up to the building are too steep and potentially hazardous.

But realistically what are the chances of a multi-million euro building being bought for low profit enterprises?

In terms of centres catering to the arts, we already have Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick Printmakers, the Hunt Museum, Impact Theatre and the Belltable Arts Centre.

With Limerick's growing sporting prowess, a sports museum could prove a valuable and highly plausible venture.



AS the Permanent TSB branch on Glentworth Street closes its doors this Friday after 170 years of business, **ANNE SHERIDAN** asks the people of Limerick what should the iconic building be used for next.

