

Market to re-open under new regime

By LEADER REPORTER

AFTER A record 90 years in receivership, the Limerick Market Trustees have been declared solvent once more by the High Court and this Friday they are entering into a contract with the Limerick Chamber of Commerce for the management of their considerable properties.

The chairman of the Market Trustees, Mr. Louis Byrne, is now confident that the new arrangement will result in the re-opening of the closed Milk Market and a return to Saturday markets within the next six months.

Over £200,000 in liquid funds has been released to the Market Trustees by the High Court with almost as much again being held by the court to clear outstanding debts incurred over the last 90 years.

"We hope to have the market refurbished and open again for business within six months", Mr. Byrne said of the Milk Market.

The Market Trustees were established by statute in 1852 to organise and administer the fairs of Limerick City and County. They went into receivership in 1898 when a Thomas Osborne sought payment of a £900 debt.

Mungret Street

The Potato Market at Merchants Quay, the Milk Market at Mungret Street and a large selection of property at Mulgrave Street are owned by the Market Trustees. Other large tracts of housing and the Markets Field are also owned by the Market Trustees, but these are being rented on long-term leases at small rents.

This Friday a management contract is being signed at the Chamber of Commerce offices in O'Connell Street which will make the chamber managers of the market's property.

This will in effect mean that the



Property plans: Mr. Brendan Woods, manager, Limerick Chamber of Commerce.

chamber's recently appointed full-time manager, Mr. J. Brendan Woods, will manage the properties.

This week Mr. Woods disclosed to the *Limerick Leader* that he intends to prepare a business development plan as soon as the contract with the Market Trustees is signed.

Recently fears have been expressed by members of the Market Traders Association through their chairman, Mr. Michael Portley, that the Milk Market will not be re-opened quickly and that when it is opened it will be radically changed.

Mr. Woods is quick to quell any

such fears, pointing out that under the act by which the trusteeship was established only the marketing of goods can be carried out.

In stages

"I envisage that the Milk Market will open as soon as possible and that we will develop it in stages with the same trade that has been carried out there for generations forming the main basis of that business", stated Mr. Woods.

He wants the market to open as soon as refurbishments have been completed and he disclosed that it is planned to rebuild the old market house in the Milk Market.

However, over 30 per cent of the cut stone that was a major feature of the Milk Market has "disappeared" and this will have to be replaced.

He emphasised that there was no question of the property being sold for redevelopment as they were precluded from taking that course by statute. "What we want to see is this part of the city becoming re-vitalised with the development of the Milk Market along its traditional lines", he said.

Limerick architects, Murray O'Laoire, have detailed drawings of plans for the refurbishment of the market completed for a number of years.

Mr. Woods explained that because of the complex nature of the receivership it was impossible to proceed with any development but he was now confident that the market would re-open later this year.

Mr. Michael Portley of the ad hoc Market Traders Association is getting very impatient with the Market Trustees and points out that the closure of the market is costing traders dearly.

"We have a broad-based association comprised of shopkeepers in the area and traders who use the market. They are all of one mind: the market has been closed for too long and should be refurbished and re-opened as soon as possible", Mr. Portley told the *Limerick Leader*.

Frustration

Mr. Portley and his association do not want an elaborate refurbishment of the market. They just want to see it open once again for business.

"We are very frustrated with the lack of action to date—after all, the market has been closed with a view to refurbishing it for months and nothing has been done", he commented.

"We have had enough of talking and now we want some action—people's livelihoods are at stake here", he added.

The Market Trustees comprise 27 members, nine nominees of Limerick City Council, nine nominees of Limerick County Council and nine nominees of Limerick Chamber of Commerce.