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BECAUSE LIFE IS LOCAL

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JP buys the Markets Field for Limerick FC

■ Big donation sees Limerick FC set for return to spiritual home

EXCLUSIVE

By ALAN OWENS

LIMERICK soccer will return to its 'spiritual home' at the Markets Field, thanks to a "generous donation" by JP McManus, the Limerick Leader can reveal.

Limerick's Person of the Year has provided the donation through his charitable trust to the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership Limited (LEDP), who announced this Wednesday that they had reached agreement with Bord na gCon to acquire the Markets Field for a sum "in excess of €1.5m".

A licence to occupy the Markets Field will be granted

to Limerick FC and supporters can expect to return to the former greyhound racing stadium "during 2012", LEDP director Gerry Boland said.

"The generosity of the JP McManus Charitable Foundation made this dream come true and I am particularly pleased to see Limerick FC, now represented by Munster Football Club Limited, returning to its roots at the historic Markets Field," Mr Boland said.

This is the third time that Mr McManus has helped sport in Limerick secure a decent home, with the racing tycoon providing €5 million to the redevelopment of the Gaelic Grounds and a separate €4 million donation for the refurbishment of Thomond Park several years

ago, a fact revealed by Pat Whelan, chairman of the Thomond Park redevelopment committee in early 2009.

Mr Boland said that the ground had the "potential to become another excellent sports stadium for the citizens of Limerick and LEDP looks forward to working closely with Limerick FC in order to achieve this".

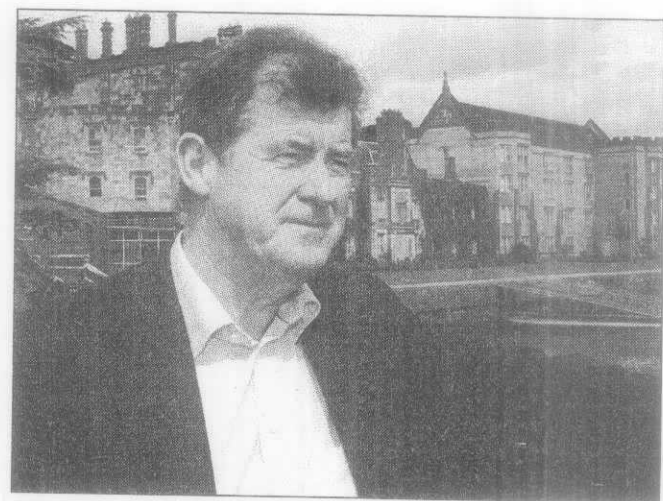
Sources close to Limerick FC, whose chairman and benefactor Pat O'Sullivan had made it a personal goal to return Limerick soccer to the ground, were said to be "delighted" with the news and see it as a "major vote of confidence in inner city centre Limerick" on the LEDP and JP McManus's part.

"The ground will be a focal point in that part of town and

a key part of the deal is that it will be available as a municipal stadium for other sports also," said a source.

The ground has not been occupied since July of last year and the club will now attempt to bring the ground up to FAI licensing standard, and expect to see it as a home to Premier League soccer next season, given the strong squad assembled by manager Pat Scully for this season, which kicks off on Friday.

The LEDP was established as a charitable organisation in 1999 in response to the closure of the Krups factory at Roxboro and its main objectives are the provision of education, training and employment and it is a major centre of employment in the area.



'A generous donation' from JP McManus has helped the LEDP to purchase the Markets Field for Limerick FC