

The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Donal Murray, with Sean Stewart, managing director, Stewarts Construction Ltd, at the signing of the contract for the second phase of the cathedral conservation project in Presbytery House

# Limerick gives generously to cathedral repairs fund

By JESSICA QUINN

GENEROUS Limerick people have donated over £400,000 in individual and business donations to the St John's Cathedral

Conservation Project fund.

So far, over £1.2 million in total has been contributed to the fund.

Bishop Donal Murray thanked the people of the diocese for their generosity in response to the project.

He was speaking at the signing of contracts for phase two of the project. "We are delighted with the response of the people of Limerick to this project," he said.

Individual donations and donations from businesses have reached £410,000. Almost £500,000 has been received from parishes in the diocese. And grant aid of £316,000 has been received.

Phase two of the project mainly involves the tower, spire and cathedral walls. Work has now started on phase two. The scaffolding on the spire has reached the top in the past few days, and work on the spire should begin in the next week.

And three additional bells for the tower have been sourced to mark the conservation.

However, although there has been a lot of money raised, there is still a long way to go.

Tony Sadlier, project manager finance said: "The total budgeted project costs exceed £8m, so

we have a long difficult journey ahead to fund the remainder."

Negotiations to provide £2.5m from the sale or use of diocesan assets are underway and it is hoped that these funds will be available in mid-2003.

Loan facilities have also been arranged for £3m.

Additional bells have been sourced for the tower to mark the conservation.

Mr Sadlier said that the project committee will be focusing on raising more money for the project.

"Much of the focus of this project committee in the coming months will be to seek assistance for various aspects of the project through donations, sponsorship, interest free loans and bequests. We have just sourced bells for the tower to mark the conservation."

"Many events have been planned for the coming year and we hope that where possible people will continue to support the project in whatever way they can."

"It was decided that the best course of action was to continue with the project work and finish the building works in mid 2003 even though the fundraising will continue for much longer," he said.

At the signing of the contracts, Tom McMahon, project manager building

works said that phase one had been successfully completed.

The Cathedral conservation project started last autumn with the replacement of the copper roof at a cost of £2.1m as well as the repairing of structural damage caused by rain leaking through the roof over the years.

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