



In this file photo the steeple and spire of the landmark Notre-Dame Cathedral collapses as the cathedral is engulfed in flames in central Paris.

### Not scaremongering

It is impossible at this stage to say “how much this is going to cost, how long this is going to last,” said Michel Aupetit, the archbishop of Paris. Macron’s five-year goal would see the cathedral’s reconstruction completed in the spring of 2024, before Paris hosts the Olympic Games that year. The top priority is to eliminate any risk to the vaulted ceiling, with the main danger coming from 500 tons of scaffolding that was erected around the fire for renovation work before the blaze.

The damage caused by just a single bar of scaffolding falling could prove irreparable, and the work to remove the structure will take several months. “This is not scare-mongering. It is a physical reality,” said Christophe-Charles Rousselot, director general of the Fondation Notre-Dame, the charity that is overseeing the gathering of donations to the cathedral. With regards to the spire, a late addition to the mediaeval cathedral designed by the 19th-century French architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, many see it as an integral part of the building.

“It needs to be rebuilt as it was before,” said Philippe Villeneuve, the architect in charge of restoring the cathedral, arguing that the sheer power of the spire integrated it with the mediaeval church. His is backed by Viollet-le-Duc’s descendants and, according to opinion polls, the French public. But the government has left open the possibility of an international competition for architects to design something new.

### ‘I feel orphaned’

Experts are also intensively researching the precise original architecture of the cathedral, so that when reconstruction begins it is as accurate as possible. “Before 2010, we only have old-style surveys, plans that have been redrawn on numerous occasions which are very partial and very imprecise,” said Remi Fromont, one of the architects responsible for the site who is working on drawing up accurate plans.

Andrew Tallon, a Belgium-born scholar who died aged 49 in November 2018, carried out hugely valuable laser scans of the interior in 2010 that have proved an even more valuable



In this file photo smoke and flames rise during a fire at the landmark Notre-Dame Cathedral in central Paris.