

**WORLD WAR 1 COMMEMORATION ISLAY 2018**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the discussions around a national commemoration event on Islay.
- 1.2 The Council is invited to:
- 1.2.1 Note the proposed initial meeting on Islay in September to consider the possible format for the event. To further note that the National Commemoration Panel will be in attendance
  - 1.2.2 Agree that the Council be represented by Councillor Maurice Corry, Policy Lead Robin Currie and Provost Len Scoullar.
  - 1.2.3 Note that the existing World War I Steering Committee, chaired by the Lord Lieutenant ,Patrick Stewart will lead on the organisation of the event and will establish an Events Sub-Committee to include the Ward Members and other appropriate local representatives to take forward and develop the event.
  - 1.2.4 Note that there could be very significant interest in the event that could include the President of the United States or a very senior representative, a senior member of the Royal Family, as well as current and former politicians from both Scotland and the UK.
  - 1.2.5 Note that the event would be centered around a service of remembrance at the cemeteries on the Mull of Oa but that experience elsewhere suggests that developing a programme over a day and a half to include a community concert and parade could be appropriate.
  - 1.2.6 Recognise the logistics of getting people onto Islay in large numbers could be challenging and would need engagement with external partners to maximise the economic benefits that could be gained from a national or international focus on the island.
  - 1.2.7 Recognise in principle that the Council will need to identify funding circa £25k to support the event and that this will be identified from within existing budgets in Customer Services and that assistance should also be sought from the Scottish Government to develop the best possible commemoration.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report provides further details in respect of the proposed national World War One commemoration event in Islay.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council is invited to:

- 3.1 Note the proposed initial meeting on Islay in September to consider the possible format for the event. To further note that the National Commemoration Panel will be in attendance.
- 3.2 Agree that the Council be represented by Councillor Maurice Corry, Policy Lead Robin Currie and Provost Len Scoullar.
- 3.3 Note that the existing World War I Steering Committee, chaired by the Lord Lieutenant, Patrick Stewart, will lead on the organisation of the event and will establish an Events Sub-Committee to include the Ward Members and other appropriate local representatives to take forward and develop the event.
- 3.4 Note that there could be very significant interest in the event that could include the President of the United States or a very senior representative, a senior member of the Royal Family, as well as current and former politicians from both Scotland and the UK.
- 3.5 Note that the event would be centered around a service of remembrance at the cemeteries on the Mull of Oa but that experience elsewhere suggests that developing a programme over a day and a half to include a community concert and parade could be appropriate.
- 3.6 Recognise the logistics of getting people onto Islay in large numbers could be challenging and would need engagement with external partners to maximise the economic benefits that could be gained from a national or international focus on the island.
- 3.7 Recognise in principle that the Council will need to identify funding circa £25k to support the event and that this will be identified from within existing budgets in Customer Services and that assistance should also be sought from the Scottish Government to develop the best possible commemoration.

## 4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Islay was suggested as being a possible venue for a national commemoration event and this was communicated to the Armed Forces Champion who made the Council aware of the opportunity and that Government Ministers were supportive of the idea.
- 4.2 The Council at its meeting on 25 June 2015 gave in principle support to the proposal and thereafter a discussion took place with Norman Drummond CBE FRSE the Chair of the National Commemorations Panel, the Lord Lieutenant for Argyll and Bute Patrick Stewart, Councillor Maurice Corry and the Head of Governance and Law to establish more clearly what the vision was for such an event.
- 4.3 The event would be centered around a service of remembrance at the cemeteries on the Mull of Oa but experience elsewhere suggests that developing a programme over a day and a half to include a community concert and parade could be appropriate.
- 4.4 The cemeteries, where the graves of American servicemen that were lost at sea, are situated to the north of the island and it is likely that only a small number of people could be accommodated at the site of the remembrance event. There would be an opportunity to involve the community more widely in events at one of the main settlements, probably Bowmore. There would also be the opportunity for local distilleries to be invited to sponsor and support the commemoration.
- 4.5 There is currently little spare transport /accommodation on Islay during the main season and the suggestion is that the event might be held in February. If the US President was attending then there would need to be a separate plan developed that could be bolted on to the events planning to ensure that the island could cope with the likely influx of visitors and security for such a visit. This would ensure international coverage of the event and showcase Islay and Argyll and Bute to the world.
- 4.6 Initial discussions have established that the US Policy was to repatriate the bodies of the fallen and it is believed that there may only be two graves that still contain the remains of the servicemen. It is suggested that efforts could be made to catalogue the names of the service men and present that online to tie in with the event as this might provide a focus in the USA for descendants to contemplate a visit to the island to visit the grave of a relative and to recognise the care and attention given to the cemeteries even after 100 years.
- 4.7 If a community concert was envisaged it might be possible to have a national collaboration with a stage show such as Far Far From Ypres, and/or to arrange a concert from a local band such as Capercaillie or Skerryvore.
- 4.8 The event planning should also include involvement with the schools on Islay to create that link between the past and the present day. The Lord Lieutenant Patrick Stewart kindly offered to summarise the history of the ships that were lost off Islay and this is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.9 The Council should recognise that this event provides a great opportunity to showcase Argyll and Bute nationally and perhaps internationally.

- 4.10 The initial meeting will also explore the appropriate mechanisms to develop strong links with the civil servants who support the national commemoration panel who will have an insight into how other national events have been progressed. The existing local arrangements have ensured that there are very strong links with the lieutenancy and this will be invaluable in ensuring that due regard is given to protocol.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The proposed meeting on Islay would create the opportunity to develop the event concept and for key people to meet to agree the way forward. The Council will need to consider how to take forward the initiative in a sensitive and dignified manner whilst maximising the opportunity to showcase Argyll and Bute and the economic and social opportunities that the area offers. The event will entail detailed events planning to ensure success.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy - The commemoration of the sacrifice of those who served in World War I has been agreed by Council.
- 6.2 Financial - Possible contribution in 2017-18 of up to £25k.
- 6.3 Legal – None.
- 6.4 HR – None.
- 6.5 Equalities – None.
- 6.6 Risk – None.
- 6.7 Customer Service – None.

**Douglas Hendry**  
**Executive Director of Customer Services**

**Policy Lead: Councillor Robin Currie**  
**Armed Forces Champion: Councillor Maurice Corry**

2 September 2015

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Appendix 1 - History of the ships that were lost off Islay