

WW100 Commemorative Event Islay 4th May 2018

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update to Council on the national World War 1 centennial (WW100) commemoration on Islay on 4th May.

In 2015 The Council committed to supporting this national commemorative event and made a contribution of £25k to the local Group WW100 Islay. These funds supported an inspirational and ambitious programme of local events which included actively engaging young people in the act of remembrance and will provide a lasting legacy for the community on the Island. The outcome is of great credit to the local people and the organising group and in particular to the Chair, Jenni Minto.

The Council is invited to record its appreciation to the main organisers of the Commemorative event.

Recommendations

The Council is invited to:

- a) record its appreciation to the local group, coordinated and represented by Jenni Minto, Museum of Islay Life, and the wider community on the achievement of this significant commemorative event, their commitment to ensuring a lasting legacy and the spirit of community, compassion and resilience which made the event an inspiring and unique tribute.
- b) recognise the personal contribution from the Lord Lieutenant in leading on the organisation of the commemorative event and his support for the request to the Princess Royal to attend the event on Islay on 4th May.
- c) to formally record their gratitude and appreciation of the decision of the WW100 Commemorations Panel to hold a national commemorative event on Islay and in particular to record its thanks for the personal and continuing commitment shown by Professor Drummond and his team and to those colleagues in the Scottish government, led by Mrs Marion Morris, on the planning and delivery of the event.
- d) to formally recognise the contribution made by Council staff to ensuring a successful event which included staff from across Governance & Law, Roads and Amenity, Planning & Regulatory and Education Services, and to thank all those employees involved for their efforts.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

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3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Islay WW100 Event formed part of a series of First World War Commemorative Events being run by the Scottish Government from November 2014 until the 1 Jan 2019, recognising key aspects of that War which are particularly relevant to Scotland. The Islay event was headed by Professor Norman Drummond in his role as Chair of the WW100 Commemorations with support from the Lord-Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute, Patrick Stewart, Argyll and Bute Council and with considerable involvement from the people of Islay, coordinated and represented by Jenni Minto, Museum of Islay Life.
- 4.2 Islay and Jura lost over 200 of their own men on the battlefields and seas of WW1 and in 1918 the war arrived directly on the shores of Islay with the torpedoing of the troopship SS Tuscania and the collision of HMS Otranto with another vessel in her convoy which resulted in the deaths of over 500, mainly American, servicemen. The sinking of the SS Tuscania on 5 Feb 1918 was the first major loss of US troops as they transshipped to the UK and then onward to France to join the fledgling but rapidly expanding American Expeditionary Force under General John Pershing. Up to the sinking of the SS Tuscania, the effects of WW1 had not been physically visible to Islay residents (although many men had already died in France and elsewhere). The sinking of the SS Tuscania and the second tragedy of the loss of the HMS Otranto, so close to the end of WW1 and not due to enemy action, the human aftermath and the reaction of the islanders in aiding US and UK servicemen has remained a powerful inspiration on Islay to the present day.
- 4.3 The aim of the events on 4th May was therefore to conduct Remembrance and commemorate activity to honour the sacrifice and bravery of the American Troops, British Crews of the SS Tuscania and HMS Otranto and the Islay people involved in the response to the sinkings. Remembrance of Islay's wider losses in WW1 was also integral to the event as remembrance and commemoration is but one element and it was considered equally important to reflect on the events 100 years ago to consider what we might learn from these events and this was considered especially true for those under the age of 24yrs.
- 4.4 It is worth noting that the key 100th anniversaries of the sinking of the SS Tuscania (5 Feb 2018) and HMS Otranto (6 Oct 2018) fell outside of the 4 May 2018, this date was chosen as it coincided with the culmination of the major NATO maritime training event Exercise JOINT WARRIOR, and consequently enabled significant US, UK and German naval contributions to the event.
- 4.5 The commemorative event on 4th May commenced with a small Service for the Rededication of the American Monument at the Mull of Oa, a memorial service at sea involving British, American, French and German naval ships, a

larger public service at the Port Ellen War Memorial and a beating of the Retreat by the Royal Naval band as well as a number of tributes organised by the local communities. The event received extensive press and television coverage including coverage of the return of the American Flag to Islay, which was created by islanders in 1918 to ensure those lost at sea could be buried with respect and full military honours, and is now owned by the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC.

- 4.6 HRH the Princess Royal and her husband Sir Tim Laurence undertook a number of tributes as part of the event which was also attended by a wide range of senior representatives from the UK, the USA, France and Germany as well as members of a wide range of communities across Islay and descendants of those people involved in the tragedy at the time. In addition to the memorial services these tributes included visits to the Commonwealth graves and the planting of new woods undertaken in conjunction with the Woodlands Trust at Dunlossit.
- 4.7 The event was the largest of the WW100 commemorations in Argyll and Bute and comes towards the end of a very fitting and respectful series of commemoration events commencing in 2014 and concluding later this year. The Council facilitates a steering group to assist the commemorations made up of Councillors, officers and representatives from the community. The group is Chaired by the Lord-Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute, whose involvement has been pivotal in securing support from across the community and throughout the whole Council area. The Council is invited to recognise that personal contribution from the Lord Lieutenant and his support for the request to the Princess Royal to attend the event on Islay on 4th May.
- 4.8 The WW100 Scottish Commemorations Panel was established by the Scottish Government under the chairmanship of Professor Norman Drummond to recommend a programme of events to commemorate the centenary of World War One. The Panel gave their consent and support for this event to take place in Argyll and Bute and the Council is invited to formally record their gratitude and appreciation for that decision and in particular to record its thanks for the personal and continuing commitment shown by Professor Drummond and his team and to those colleagues in the Scottish government, led by Mrs Marion Morris, on the planning and delivery of the event. There was also substantial support from an enormous range of other agencies and organisations including the, the Royal Navy, the British Legion, Police Scotland, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Woodlands Trust and the RSPB.
- 4.9 The Council will be gratified to receive the attached correspondence from Professor Drummond, and the Lord-Lieutenant commending Council staff for their efforts in supporting the successful delivery of the event on Islay. The range of Council staff who were involved across all departments was extensive and involved ongoing work over the last few years with a very intensive period of support leading up to the 4th of May. All services of the Council contributed to this support and in that respect it was truly a one Council approach to making this event such a memorable and fitting tribute to the soldiers and sailors who lost their lives, the people of Islay who responded so magnificently 100 years ago and finally to remember those

from Islay who lost their lives in World War One. **Appendix 1&2.**

- 4.10 The Council WW1 Steering Group has sought to ensure that all of our communities have had an opportunity to pay their respects to those who gave their lives from across all of our communities and it is planned to draw all of the activity together and to report to Council at a future date on all that has been achieved.
- 4.11 The Provost approved a civic reception to recognise the contribution of those on Islay who had helped make the commemoration event a success and guests from the partners who helped deliver the service were warmly received in 1 Charlotte Street on the evening of 4th May. Schoolchildren from Islay High School provided music for the guests and the Council ensured that local suppliers from across the Island were contracted to provide the buffet based on local produce and the Council efforts were supplemented by gifts from local companies and distilleries. The feedback from those attending was that it was a truly fitting end to a memorable and uplifting day.
- 4.12 The event received massive media coverage, local national and international which has promoted Islay and the wider Argyll and Bute area in a most positive way. The feedback from Council staff who were involved on Islay was very positive indeed with the common response being that it was a privilege to be involved with such a special event. The lasting message from the event is that any visitor to the island will receive a welcome that is in keeping with that Islay tradition that was put to the test in 1918 and which was so suitably commemorated 100 years later on the 4th of May 2018.

The legacy as identified by the islanders to the WW1 Steering Group is as follows:

1. American Monument now scheduled by Historic Environment Scotland
2. All war Memorials cleaned and lettering redone
3. New railings for the Port Ellen Memorial
4. Schools engaged
 - All primary schools visited museum
 - Used WW1 as the hooks for different learnings
 - Endeavour project - p4/5 PE play
 - Poetry with Ryan Van Winkle
 - Music
 - Opportunity for children to perform in major commemoration.
5. Other island charities involved: Community Garden, Islay Arts, Islay Visual Arts, Feis Ile, Islay Quilters, both Islay Pipe bands, all Gaelic choirs, St Johns Caterers, South Islay Development, Ella's Highland Dancers
6. Islay businesses involved: all Distilleries, Kilchoman especially, Islay Ales, Guest Houses, Hotels, shops, Woollen Mill, Mundells, Anvil Arts,
7. Two WW100 woodlands - there will be 12,000 trees planted on Islay - 4 for every member of the population - Bruichladdich and Storakaig, Dunlossit

8. The flag is here - massive publicity
9. WW100 Trail being worked on - bronze plaques being inserted into local stone - 35 locations on Islay and Jura
10. Increased visitors and profile for the Museum - the same number of visitors in the first week of May as visited in the entire month of May last year! Increased income - increased opening times - increase in economy
11. Connections made with America
12. Connections in Argyll - education work through Kathleen Johnstone, Campbeltown pottery, hotels
13. Amazing coverage on TV, Radio and print media - increased visitors
14. Souvenir brochures ...

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Commemorative Event on Islay to mark 100th anniversaries of the sinking of the SS Tuscania (5 Feb 2018) and HMS Otranto (6 Oct 2018) and the respectful and compassionate response of the islanders to these events, at a time when many of their own community were absent through war, was significant in honouring the sacrifice of servicemen and women, reflecting on the global impact of WWI and on the domestic impact of the war during 1914-18. The commemorations achieved a balance of remembrance as well as encouraging a spirit of research and inquiry in educational and genealogical terms, thus leaving a lasting legacy and the opportunity to showcase the resilience, compassion and kindness of a small island community which still has resonance today.

The outcome of the event is of great credit to the local people and the organising group and in particular to the Chair, Jenni Minto and the Council is invited to record its appreciation to the main organisers of the Commemorative event and to note the contribution made by Council staff to ensuring a successful event which included staff from across Governance & Law, Roads and Amenity, Planning & Regulatory and Education Services.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy: none
 - 6.2 Financial: The Council had previously made funding provision for the event
 - 6.3 and "in kind" support was also provided.
 - 6.4 Legal: None
 - 6.5 HR: None
 - 6.6 Equalities: None
 - 6.7 Risk: None
- Customer Service: None

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services
21 May 2018

Policy Lead Councillor Rory Colville

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Appendix 1 Letter from Professor Norman Drummond
Appendix 2 Letter from Lord-Lieutenant, Patrick Stewart