

Agenda Item	7
Report No	LA/17/21

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Lochaber Area Committee

**Date:** 9 August 2021

**Report Title:** Commando Memorial – Garden Extension

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following discussion with the Commando Association and the Royal Marines, it has been agreed that works require to be carried out to the Commando Memorial Garden to provide a better environment for tributes.
- 1.2 Design has been agreed with partners, and funding is now sought for completion of the project, bearing in mind that further works may be required to the Memorial itself as a second phase of site improvements

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Note the proposed works to the site which have been agreed with the Commando Association and the Royal Marines.
  - ii. Agree to allocate up to £65,000 from the Commando Memorial Garden Fund
  - iii. Note the intention to carry out further works to the Memorial which will be the subject of a future report.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – the financial contribution required can be committed from the Commando Memorial Garden Fund, which is held specifically for improvements to the Memorial site. These funds are raised by public donations given at the site. The current balance in the Fund is £69,337.4. Noting the cost of the project is higher than available resources, partners are working to raise the match-funding. No contract will be awarded until full funding is in place.

- 3.2 Legal – none. Highland Council owns the Commando Memorial site. In addition, these proposed works comply with the Council’s tripartite agreement with the Commando Association and Royal Marines to maintain the site appropriately.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – the works to the site will improve access for those with physical disabilities.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – none
- 3.5 Risk – none. The contract will be procured using standard Council processes and contract will be monitored
- 3.6 Gaelic – none

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Commando Memorial lies less than a mile north of Spean Bridge and was erected in 1952. Scott Sutherland was commissioned to produce the memorial and it was unveiled by the Queen Mother in September that year, becoming an iconic monument known throughout the world as a tribute to the Commandos who trained at nearby Achnacarry and who have fought in battle ever since.
- 4.2 The nearby Memorial Garden was created some years later and provides a focal point for those wishing to leave personal tributes to Commandos who have died during and since WW2. Almost 150,000 people now visit the site every year.
- 4.3 The whole area is managed under a tripartite agreement between the Commando Association, Royal Marines and The Highland Council. This agreement sets out the broad guidelines for how the site should be managed and maintained. All grounds maintenance is carried out by the Council and amenities staff take pride in maintaining the whole area to a very high standard.
- 4.4 In 2011 the Memorial Garden was extended to accommodate the growing number of tributes being laid. An ‘outer circle’ was created which provided much more space for tributes. In addition, a specific area for scattering ashes was created. Unfortunately, many people have preferred to continue to leave tributes in the central area resulting in a cramped area which does not give tributes the setting they deserve. The purpose of the current proposal is to enclose the entire garden with a low wall to offer protection from the weather and to infill the central area with boulders from Achnacarry Estate, which will ensure tributes are laid in the outer area.
- 4.5 In addition, the access bridge and path to the garden will be improved and widened, to allow easier access for those with a physical disability and to allow social distancing.

#### **5.0 COSTS**

- 5.1 The works were tendered in June with returns being received in late-July. The total project cost for this phase of the project is £95,972. As this is more than is available in the Memorial Garden Trust Fund, partners will work together to identify match-funding. No contract will be awarded until full funding is in place.
- 5.2 The works to the Memorial Garden will be carried out sympathetically with respect to its setting and purpose. All tributes will be photographed in situ, carefully removed to another part of the site and then laid again once works are complete.

5.3 It is hoped that these works can be commissioned and completed prior to Remembrance Day 2021 but this will be dependent on achieving the full funding package. At this time, it is hoped that a second phase will encompass cleaning of the Memorial and works to the base and paved surrounds.

Designation: Carron McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 26 July 2021

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Background Papers: