**Sleat War Memorial Local Working Group**

**Sleat, Isle of Skye**

**Minutes of a Public Meeting held on Wednesday 16th Marc 2016 at Seomar Cruinneachaid**

**The Agenda for this meeting is shown as Appendix # 3**

**Chair: Councillor Hamish Fraser (Ind)**

The meeting was held to discuss community options for the refurbishment of the Sleat War Memorial at Kilmore with the potential for funding from external agencies including the War Memorials Trust and the Highland Council.

Councillor Fraser opened the meeting at 1930 and welcomed members of the public. Cllr. Fraser advised that he had been asked to chair the meeting and is impartial in respect of the topic of the session.

Councillor Fraser invited Roddy Murray, Chair of Sleat Community Council to give an introduction and background.

Mr Murray (RM) reminded the meeting that it was being recorded for minuting purposes only and would be destroyed once the minute was circulated and agreed. RM gave a short update on the location of the WM at 6, Kilmore, and was erected in 1922. The last name on the WM is Neil MacInnes who was killed in Aden in 1955. There are 51 names on the memorial. RM showed a book of poetry of war stories and including one by John McLeod of Tormore who was the keeper of that estate for more than 40 years. RM reminded of those who died to defend the freedom of those to flollow. The SCC has looked at options of ways of refurbishing the SWM but at the same time respecting the wishes of the community and particularly those who have relatives inscribed on the memorial. Assistance is potentially available for repair and maintenance. The tenancy of the croft has recently changed hands and at the SCC meeting on 2nd February it was advised that the siting of the SWM was potentially a conflict with proposals for development of the croft. Rob Ware (RW) and I will go over the options available to the community including a possible relocation. The aim of the meeting tonight is to assess options for the memorial’s future and it is hoped that a local working group can be formed to take any options forward for the future. RM thanked the chair for allowing this introduction.

HF introduced RW to give a background of the WM and with the meeting had been called for today. In 2014 a local resident approached the SCC with a view of donating money to allow refurbishment work to be carried out on the memorial, as that person had a forebear’s name present on the roll of 51 names. From 2014 RW contacted the WMT to create a file for the SWM and open the possibility of funding. WMT and HC are the two principal funding options. RW had tried to set up several meetings and eventually a site meeting was held in September 2015. There are 280 WMs in Highland and the SWM is now online at the [WMT](https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/145021/) with photographs, records, condition surveys. The meeting was held with Robin Pope and Andrew Hunter from HC, Angus Dunpark, RM, RW. He showed photographs of the current condition of the site and it was believed that more than 10 years ago there was damage to the connecting rods. Access is difficult and RW stated that to do nothing was not an option as it was firmly believed that the condition of the WM was deteriorating badly and needed urgent attention. RW would read out some comments later from those who are unable to attend tonight. The site meeting discussed options of costs, including the plinth, the path, lettering and some indicative costs have been obtained. RW stated that it was imperative that work be carried out as soon as possible to avoid further damage.

RW repeated that no decisions have been made in respect of the SWM and it was not the responsibility of the SCC to manage any project that may be initiated by the community. RW then outlined the options that were seemingly available to pursue, subject to funding being agreed from any agency. These are:

* The SWM remains in its current position with refurbishment works to be carried out to a specification, none of which has been determined at present. Work would include improvements to access, the WM itself, the protective barriers and vegetation clearance. As it is a working croft suitable stock fencing to protect visitors to the memorial is paramount. RW showed photographs of the current conditions of the site.
* A second option would be to consider the fact that new circumstances now prevail and that the SWM could be relocated to an alternative site couold be considered. This was in view of the fact the tenant Angus Macdonald (junior) has plans to develop the area as continuing as a working group and the potential for building a home for himself on the croft. It is intended to rebuild the byre that has been partially destroyed. Livestock remain the croft and there are cows present on the croft. Angus ‘Dunpark’ (Macdonald-senior) was asked to outline the changes in behaviour of cattle from the early 20th century to today. An option was discussed at the September meeting to look at options to move the memorial to an entirely new site. This included the potential of moving the WM to an area in the old churchyard at Kilmore that was identified as being able to provide improved access and retaining the attributes of the current location, such as views etc. RW said that several WMs in Highland have been moved across the area for reasons such as roads development etc. The WMT have a presumption against relocations of WMs unless it was deemed essential such as on safety grounds, or a community development. RW has produced a briefing paper on the options of relocating to the churchyard. Funding for such a relocation would be much harder to achieve than for works to be carried out at the existing site.
* RW re-iterated that no decisions have been made on any options and that it was now necessary to open the process to gauge the views of the community but at the same time respecting the wishes of the tenant who has indicated that it is his desire to purchase the 6, Kilmore Croft, from the Clan Donald Lands Trust in due course, at the terms agreed for this form of transaction. At this time no application to purchase the croft has been submitted to CDLT. RW added that the number of people visiting the site on Remembrance Day has decreased in recent years and RM added that conditions on the 2015 anniversary were very poor. RW and RM were unaware if the area around the SWM is ‘consecrated ground’.

RW outlined the process for obtaining funding from the WMT but the Centenary Fund does terminate in 2018. The SCC has no real funds to contribute itself so fundamentally it is the WMT and HC that could provide funding. RW asked the floor for any questions on what he had said so far.

Betty Robertson asked Angus Dunpark who owned the land on which the SWM is sited. He confirmed that it is Angus Macdonald (junior) as tenant but the land remained under CDLT ownership. Charlie MacGillivray confirmed through an Act of Parliament in 1929 the Church does not own churchyards, but these were handed over to local authorities. Angus Kilmore added that the last time the SWM was debated locally it was agreed that it would remain in its current location, around 15-20 years ago. HF suggested there would be time for discussion later in the meeting.

Roddy Murray outlined that he had attended a seminar from the WMT and HC that took place on 6th October 2015. Mr Murray’s notes from that meeting are shown below as Appendix # 1.

Rob Ware then read out the minutes of the SCC meeting held on 2nd February 2016 and the extract of that item is shown as Appendix # 2 shown below.

RM added that he had phoned the CDLT Museum and left a message asking for any information in those records of the SWM. No response has been received to date. RM further added that he had received a phone call from Lord Macdonald of Macdonald who had been aware that discussions were taking place regarding the WM and wanted to say that three members of his own family are recorded on the SWM. Several local people had called him about the memorial and in his own view ‘it was unthinkable’ that the memorial could be relocated. The knoll on which it is situated was of no use to the remainder of the land. Lord Macdonald apologised for not being able to attend tonight’s meeting.

Hamish Fraser thanked RW and RM for their inputs tonight. RW added that there was one email from Maggie Macdonald as Museum Curator at CDLT. She said: ‘*We have looked pretty thoroughly through the archives and not found anything that shows who owns the ground and the access path. However, two of the letter books covering the key dates are missing - the letter books for April-September 1920 and for April-Oct 1921.*

*The memorial is on 6 Kilmore and I would guess that it may well have stayed in the ownership of the estate. There is no feu as far as I can see or any other reference in the rent records*

*The memorial was dedicated in 1922. I have a copy of an extract from a letter written by Isabel Moore's aunts recounting the events of that day. She writes that the memorial was handed over to the care of the parish council. This would suggest to me that ownership was not transferred, just the responsibility for upkeep. The estate rent records are divided into categories e.g. feus, ground rents, houses, crofts etc and are very detailed, including the schools, the doctor's house and other places that were to do with local government, as well as the churches etc. There are also notes against individual crofts recording specific details about a croft or its tenancy when such things arose. There is nothing against 6 Kilmore.*

*I am sorry this has taken so long but we wanted to make sure we had not missed anything’.*

Further to this Maggie Macdonald sent the following note as she was not able to attend tonight’s meeting.

Maggie Macdonald Thoughts on the SWM for 16/3

*Hi Rob*

*Just a few personal thoughts about the war memorial as I will not be able to attend the meeting next week.*

*I have not had time to do any follow up research to the information I gave you from the archives, but I feel that it only gives an incomplete version of what decisions were made, as well as how and why they were made. One of the problems with the Macdonald archives is that it is only a partial record - so it includes copies of the out letters from the Estate Office in Portree but not any related correspondence in which the options for siting the memorial might have been gone into in more detail. A lot of thought obviously went into where they sited it as they didn't just plonk these memorials down where it was most convenient, as the war losses were too raw and meant too much to people. The Lord Macdonald at the time did not have the capacity to run his own affairs, but had a Curator Bonis to do this for him - so he did not make the decision. The Estate Office, the Curator Bonis, and probably Lady Macdonald (who herself had lost sons in the war) would have had an input but I doubt whether it would have been a case of the them saying the memorial goes here or nowhere, without some input from the local community as well. Then there is the fact that croft 6, then a Nicolson croft, was offered as a site for the memorial. If I can back any of this up by research I will let you know but it probably won't be till after the Clan reopens for the season, that is assuming I can get access to the library then.*

*Another reason for the site might be that the hill down to the church is known as Bealach an t-Sleuchd or ‘the pass of the kneeling’ where pre-reformation parishioners would go down on their knees when they came in sight of the church. So, the site has some connection to the church and community.*

*I feel strongly that the memorial should stay where it is if at all possible even if it makes it more difficult to repair- rather than move it, just because it is easier for everyone. I also feel any move should be on the basis of a proper consultation and community vote rather than a vague feeling that the majority are in favour of x or y solution (though I am sure the community council is not going to act on just vague feelings). The fact that it is in a raised situation and can be seen from the sea, and has all the sailors' names on that sea side of the memorial, would be lost if it was moved to the churchyard.*

*Factors such as potential fouling by dogs could be got over by a No dogs sign, - and anyway I doubt whether many visitors would get their dogs out for such a short walk.*

*I hope it all goes well at the meeting*

Councillor Fraser thanked RW and RM for their information and said that he would now open this to the floor for questions. He would not answer any specific questions but would use the role of chair to ensure that all participants would be heard and that he would not tolerate any behaviour that he deemed unacceptable.

Angus Kilmore asked if it was known how the memorial was originally funded. He suggested that it may have been by public subscription, but no one knew for certain. He added that he believed that funding for repair should ‘not be a problem’. The WM site could be enlarged without reducing the major part of the croft. Cattle should not be permitted in the area and he suggested 100 sqm may be a figure. Rob Ware then showed recent photographs of the overall site including the erosion of the concrete plinth and access path. Angus Kilmore suggested a new granite plinth. RM reminded of the difficulty of access from the road to the WM. Access to the shed could be fenced off. Betty Robertson reminded of the ‘right to roam’. Another resident reminded at the time it was not the norm to site monuments in churchyards and that a separate site was preferred to these. Councillor Fraser asked for more views. Betty Robertson said that she felt we owed it to those whose family members are on the memorial to leave it where it is. Archie Maccalman suggested that the WM should be ‘fit for purpose’ and that the location is almost secondary. Access via the path is narrow and he would like to see improvements and he recognises both sides views. There is clearly a dangerous issue here. Betty Robertson asked if the community could buy part of the croft which was an option. This would be down to the tenant said Councillor Fraser. There would have to be follow-up meetings. Angus Kilmore asked what the price for the inconvenience to the tenant if the community was able to secure that part of the croft to secure the area in perpetuity. Betty Robertson said that the family had other crofts in the area. Councillor Fraser said that this is of no relevance to tonight’s meeting.

Betty Robertson said that the Nicolson family were proud that their land had been originally ‘chosen’ for the WM site and 8 years ago Colin Nicolson was upset at the prospect of any changes there. Councillor Fulton was consulted at the time and no further changes took place. Fiona Smith said that she had heard about a possible move at the old people’s lunch club and was very upset that it may have to be moved. She said that it was disrespectful of the tenant to those elderly people of Sleat to suggest that it be moved. The memorial was the only place that relatives could go to. Ms Smith said she thought it disgusting to even consider its relocation although she recognised that urgent work was required at the site. Could new access be secured, and signs could be erected to deter dog visits.

Hamish Fraser said that the general view seemed that the WM should stay where it is, but he remains impartial and wishes to hear more views, and has to be handled delicately and fully involving the tenant. Another resident said that she had an aunt’s name on the memorial and that her family would be very upset for it to be moved. Someone else reminded that there has been little maintenance on the site in recent years. Veana Cleland asked if there could be alternative access to the croft leaving the WM unaffected and so could options for this be discussed with the tenant. RW asked if the plans for the croft including boundaries and potentially house site were available. Angus Dunpark replied that there is a plan with fences etc and showing the site of the WM but no plans for a dwelling had been proposed at this time.

Councillor Fraser asked if there was any other views, but he felt that it was not appropriate to debate specific tenant/community issues in public at this meeting but could be considered later. Flora Maclean regretted that the tenant couldn’t attend the meeting due to being on a course but asked what his view might be had he been able to be here and listen to the views so far from those at the meeting. Councillor Fraser repeated that it was unfair to criticise the tenant in his absence. Angus Kilmore talked of a WM in Stornoway that was erected in a place that all could see, and its position was pre-dominant in the town. In Portree the WM is in Somerled Square. Someone else said that any decision to move the WM in Sleat should not be taken lightly and particularly against the wishes of the community. Councillor Fraser agreed, and said that most WMs in Skye are in prominent locations and this was his view. Someone else suggested that such a location as Sleat’s would have been deemed to there for perpetuity and RM responded that it was the view of the WMT that relocations would be a last course of action and that compelling reasons were required for such an event.

Isabel Moore thanked everyone who had worked on this so far, it was her Uncle whose name is on the memorial. She felt that it would be good if this could be resolved for the mutual outcome of all concerned. Jim Fraser asked why the croft or part of it had not been de-crofted years ago so allowing the WM to remain in ‘ownership’ of the community. Councillor Fraser said that that had not happened, and other areas where memorials are sited are often on common grazing lands. Each memorial has a separate set of circumstances and is always sensitive for the relevant communities. Councillor Fraser asked if there any other comments and would ask RM and RW if they had anything to add at this time. Isobel Macdonald was upset that some people at this meeting were taking a negative view of her son who could not attend tonight due to prior engagements. Councillor Fraser said he will not tolerate a personal attack and Mrs Macdonald said the family did understand the issues. Betty Robertson said that it was her view that young people don’t understand these sorts of issues. Councillor Fraser brought this dialogue to a conclusion. All options should be considered and the discussions with the tenant be meaningful and respectful. Betty Robertson noted that the primary school took pupils up regularly to the WM.

Roddy Murray said he felt there had been a good mix of views at this meeting and this would form the basis for going forward for further discussions. We would like to see the formation of a local committee and now look to volunteers to take this forward. Hamish Fraser encouraged local people to come forward to join this group. RW suggested that the SCC would offer assistance, but this would have to be a meaningful group and needs to be independent. This is the first opportunity that the community have had in recent years to come together to discuss a way forward. The SCC would not be able to offer anything of a substantial nature in the form of funds. Roddy Murray also has a file of information and included the Friends of Clynenish WM where there is a community subscription scheme for maintenance. The Sleat working group would look at all options.

Councillor Fraser suggested that a location be the first issue to be discussed. Christine MacEachern asked how this would work in terms of a vote, and Calum MacEachern suggested that it should be the relatives of the those on the WM that should meet first with the tenant and the family. Roddy said that a committee would be the best way forward, but it would be best left for people to volunteer. Hamish Fraser referred again to the location which is causing the angst in the community, but he felt that a committee/working group is the best way forward with volunteers giving of their time as required. Hamish Fraser asked Angus Dunpark if the family would establish an accord with a local working group. The solution could be reached perhaps easier than may be believed. Hamish Fraser asked if putting names in a hat was the way forward. Tim Shone and JD MacInnes felt that it was a press-gang scenario if names were put in to a hat and that it should be volunteers putting their names forward. The SCC members are all members of the public.

Names proposed: Kirsty McGonagall, Fiona Smith, Archie Mccalman, Grace Shone. Rob Ware suggested he would provide secretarial and admin support and would join the group as an impartial member. Betty Robertson and Angus Kilmore also volunteered. Angus Kilmore asked if the Working Group could make decisions and said that, at present, he heard nobody say that they would like it to be moved. Angus Dunpark suggested that he would join the group with input from his family too.

RM said that the next stage would be engagement with the public agencies and then this would result in application for funding, irrespective of the final location. Hamish Fraser wanted to ensure fairness for the working group with a liaison with the Community Council and it was good that Rob had offered to support.

Hamish Fraser thanked the public for attending and offered to assist further as required as the project required. He also thanked Rob Ware and Roddy Murray for bringing this to the community.

The meeting closed at 2055.

Rob Ware

26/12/2017

A recording of this meeting is available to anyone on request.

Appendix # 1

WAR MEMORIAL

Notes of Workshop held at Highland Council Chamber on 6 October 2015 by War Memorials Trust

Present Alana Hughes Conservation Officer

Andrew Macmaster Conservation Officer

Helen Caseworker

Robin Pope Highland Council

15 Representatives of Highland Communities

INTRODUCTION

The War Memorials trust was set up in 1997 in order to conserve and improve War Memorials. They will help to advise, monitor, protect and conserve war memorials. There are some 100,000 memorials throughout the UK with a wide range in Scotland, permanent reminders of the ultimate sacrifice. The structures are mainly 20th century but with some from earlier conflicts. The Trust has some 3000 members nationally supported by a network of approx. 150 regional volunteers.

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The Trust will make a condition assessment, provide advice on conservation and what can be done at community level. They are a non –statutory body which follows best practice on conservation.

The Trust considers the original location of a memorial as intrinsic to its purpose and could only consider relocation as a last resort. Several of those present (Sleat, Aultbea, Petty) explained that their memorials would require to be considered for relocation as, after some 100 years circumstances had changed e.g. road safety issues would have to be addressed and land use practices had changed. The officials agreed that each situation would be considered on its merits.

In carrying out conservation work, care was required not to damage the structure by re-cutting or over-cleaning and instances were quoted of theft of precious metals, vandalism, graffiti and general neglect.

CONDITION SURVEY

Many of the problems were common to most memorials, e.g cracks, vegetation in mortar joints and inscriptions becoming less readable. Public safety and accessibility would be major factors especially for roadside locations. WMT would prefer to see lime rather than mortar used in renovations.

CENTENARY MEMORIAL RESTORATION FUND

This was set up by the Scottish Government in 2013 and is administered by Historic Scotland with a budget of £1m up to March 2018. Works which can be funded include stone/mortar repairs landscaping, steps, railings, cleaning, accessibility, lighting , CCTV and in some circumstances relocation.

APPLICATIONS

Pre application advice can be given and a professional advice grant can be awarded of up to 75% up to £1500. This is considered at WMT discretion and decisions are made within three weeks.

Applications to CMRF must include costs, VAT, quotes, and details of other funding requests. If applying for 75 % the application must be based on lowest cost. Deadline dates for applications are 30 Nov 15 and last days of March June September and December 2016.

Outcomes will be either approval, deferral pending more information or formal approval and offer letters will set out works to be undertaken, and eligibility criteria. Works other than those approved may entail clawback. Grants will normally be paid within two weeks.

Grants totalling £528k involving 67 applications have already been paid.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL SUPPORT

Highland Council are custodians rather than owners of War Memorials and they do carry out some basic maintenance e.g grass cutting. Robin Pope of the Council’s Community Services Dept explained that the Council had a budget of £50k per annum up until 2017 /18. They can help with match funding, support unsuccessful WMT bids and provide match funding where there is no WMT bid. They can fund structural works and provide benefits in kind. Assistance can be applied for through the Ward Discretionary Grants, Community Council Grants or other Council Schemes.

CONCLUSIONS

Assistance is available by way of advice and finance through WMT, CMRF and Highland Council until 2018

Robin Pope has already visited Sleat and is aware of the issues regarding Sleat War Memorial.

The officers are available for consultation at any time phone 07419 372904 or E mail [allana@warmemorials.org](mailto:allana@warmemorials.org).

Roderick J Murray

Chairman Sleat Community Council

9 October 2015

Appendix # 2 Minute of SCC meeting 2nd February 2016 (Extract of SWM agenda item)

**Sleat War Memorial**

Roddy gave an update on the War Memorial issues following the meeting with the Council in September. Very little progress has been made but the WM needs attention. Rob Ware gave an update of the paper that he wrote as a discussion document which will be used as a basis for a public meeting that will be held in March. There are several key issues, and this is a very sensitive issue for local people. The site is also a working croft and Rob invited Angus MacDonald to give his thoughts on this. Because of ownership issues there is some degree of thought that either the site will be retained with the works carried out or to potentially to consider a relocation to another site, such as within the Kilmore churchyard, which is also a Commonwealth War Graves site. Mr MacDonald outlined his views on the issues at the existing site, especially access issues, livestock, development plans and potential disease. A government poster has been produced warning of issues of dogs leaving excrement in areas where livestock roam.

Rob advised that to do nothing is not an option, but any decisions must be made by the community and not from the Community Council. The way forward will be to hold an open and transparent public meeting where all opinions, views and suggestions could be made and then to move forward with a focus group formed within the community and working with the public agencies such as the War Memorials Trust and Highland Council. Roddy updated again on the workshop that he attended in November 2015. Angus MacDonald added there was not another suitable site on the existing croft at Kilmore. John Duncan MacInnes felt that it was not consecrated ground and Veana Cleland echoed that to do nothing is not an option. Tim Shone agreed with the other councillors. A date will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Rob concluded that it should be recognised that no decisions in any way have been made and an open and public debate will provide a fair forum to hear the varying views.

Appendix # 3 Agenda for the Meeting held on 16th March 2016

COMHAIRLE CHOIMHEARSNACHD SHLEITE

SLEAT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Public Meeting-Sleat War Memorial

Seomar Cruinneachaidh, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

1930 Wednesday 16th March 2016

AGENDA

1 Welcome: Councillor Hamish Fraser-Chair

2 Introduction: Roddy Murray, Sleat Community Council

3 Background: September 2015 site meeting Rob Ware

4 War Memorials Trust Seminar October 2015 Roddy Murray

5 Minute of SCC Meeting 2nd Feb 2016 Rob Ware

6 Written Comments from Lord Macdonald & Maggie Macdonald

7 Open Discussion

8 Formation of a Committee

9 Thanks: Hamish Fraser

10 Close of Meeting