



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: **World War I Commonwealth War Graves Centenary Event and Lagan Village Somme Society Heritage Lottery Award**

Date: 13 March 2014

Reporting Officer: Rose Crozier, Assistant Director, Parks and Leisure

Contact Officer: Fiona Holdsworth, Principle Parks and Cemeteries Service Manager

1. Relevant Background Information

Lagan Village Somme Society (LVSS) has been awarded £7,800 from Heritage Lottery, First World War: the Then and Now programme which provides grants of between £3,000 and £10,000 to help groups and communities explore their First World War heritage. LVSS is one of five projects to shared £42,000. LVSS will research the lives and stories of the 77 war dead buried in Dundonald Cemetery (Forgotten Men Of Dundonald Cemetery) and share their stories with the wider community through the production of a booklet and exhibition. LVSS over the next few months will tend and maintain the First World War graves with a team of volunteers, followed by the laying of wreaths event.

LVSS was formed in 2010, the aims of the Society are to preserve and protect the history and culture, focusing on the sacrifices made by the 36th Ulster Division during the Great War. LVSS will also remember the sacrifices made by service men and woman from across the British Empire that have fought in the Great War and elsewhere.

Dundonald Cemetery opened in 1905 and covers 45 acres which contains war graves from both wars. There are 165 identified casualties buried in Dundonald Cemetery with 77 Commonwealth burials of the 1914 to 1918 War and 88 of the 1939 to 1945 War. The First World War burials are scattered throughout the cemetery. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected on the crest of the hill facing the entrance, in honour of the men

	<p>buried there. The Second World War graves are also in various parts of the cemetery. Some are marked by permanent private memorials but most of them have headstones of the traditional Commission design.</p> <p>During the First World War Belfast was a port of embarkation and auxiliary patrol base also housed within the sanctuary of Belfast was a war hospital that had the capacity of coping with 500 casualties. The Second World War saw Belfast as a naval base of the western approaches command, fighter headquarters for the defence of the naval anchorages in Northern Ireland and again a hospital centre. There was a Royal Air Force station at the airport, Victoria Barracks and Belfast was the headquarters of the Northern Ireland district prisoner of war camp located at Holywood and a prisoner of war military hospital at Orangefield.</p>
2.	Key Issues
	<p>The Chairman of LVSS has successfully received funding from Heritage Lottery to refurbish World War I Graves, 77 in Dundonald Cemetery and 2 in Knock Cemetery. Commonwealth War Graves Commission has given their permission to restore the graves and it is anticipated that the work will be completed by July 2014.</p> <p>To celebrate this achievement in receiving funding and the refurbishment of 79 war graves LVSS have requested a launch event in Dundonald Cemetery. Date and time for this event is still to be confirmed but it is anticipated that a small delegation of 12 representatives and local politicians will attend this event.</p> <p>To commemorate the start of World War I, LVSS have requested the use of Dundonald Cemetery to conduct a Drum Head Remembrance Service (on the battlefield a drum would have been used as an altar) on Sunday 3 August 2014 between 14.30pm and 15.30pm. It is anticipated that 200 participants will attend this service including politicians, Somme Societies, British Legions along with relatives of the war dead.</p> <p>LVSS and their various contractors will be reminded that Dundonald is still a working cemetery and that their work scheduled will have to take into consideration ongoing burials. Similarly the launch event will also need to be planned so as not to infringe on any funerals and to be held in a respectful manner.</p> <p>The event organisers will be required to ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the council's satisfaction and subject to further conditions;-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there are no displays of paramilitary emblems or regalia. • That the council's events policy is fully complied with. • Appropriate working methods are applied on the historical war graves. • Agree appropriate grave restoration and events schedule.

3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> There are no financial contributions requested at this stage.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> Council officers will liaise with the organisers in relation to the proposed works and events.</p> <p><u>Assets</u> The restoration work should enhance the First World War graves.</p>
4.	Equality Implications
	This event would have positive implications in terms of the promotion of equality and good relations, if undertaken in an inclusive manner.
5.	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to accede to the request for the proposed works and the events subject to the Society satisfying the terms to be agreed by the Director of Parks & Leisure and on condition that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The event and works organisers resolve all operational and other issues to the Council's satisfaction 2. Any appropriate legal agreements are authorised by the Town Solicitor 3. The Society meets all the statutory requirements including Health and Safety and licensing. 4. Sensitivities and respect for burials and graves are observed.
6.	Decision Tracking
	Sharon Mc Cloy, Cemeteries & Crematorium Manager and Lynne McCreery, Community Parks Outreach Manager will meet the Society in March 2014.
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	LVSS - Lagan Village Somme Society
8.	Documents Attached
	None