

ASSET MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE: 2 JUNE 2016

**ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY
REQUEST TO SITE MEMORIAL PLAQUE ON AMENITY LAND
AT CLAY LOAN, KIRKWALL**

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a request from Orkney Heritage Society to site a memorial plaque to the victims of Orkney witch trials on amenity land at the top of Clay Loan, Kirkwall.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sub-committee is invited to note:-

- 2.1 that Orkney Heritage Society has submitted a request to install a memorial plaque to the victims of Orkney witch trials on amenity land at the top of Clay Loan, Kirkwall, as indicated on the location plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report;
- 2.2 that Orkney Heritage Society will be responsible for all installation costs and future maintenance costs of the memorial, referred to at paragraph 2.1 above;
- 2.3 that Orkney Heritage Society has consulted widely within the local community and received positive feedback in respect of the proposed memorial;
- 2.4 that Orkney Heritage Society will take full responsibility for health and safety issues and will take cognisance of the need to provide a robustly installed memorial with minimal disturbance to the surrounding area; and
- 2.5 that Orkney Heritage Society favours a discrete memorial comprising a circular carved stone installed at ground level.

It is recommended:-

- 2.6 that powers be delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to liaise with Orkney Heritage Society, and thereafter reach agreement, on the design of the proposed memorial plaque to the victims of Orkney witch trials; and
- 2.7 that, following agreement on the design, Orkney Heritage Society be granted permission to install a discrete memorial at ground level to the victims of the Orkney witch trials on amenity land at the top of Clay Loan, Kirkwall.

3. POLICY ASPECTS

- 3.1 In terms of the Council Plan 2013-18, the proposal as noted in the recommendations of this report support the Council value of working together and community partnership.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inspiration for the proposal to erect a memorial to the victims of the Orkney witch trials came from a lecture given by Professor Liv Willumsen at Orkney College in 2012, comparing witch trials in Northern Norway and Scotland.
- 4.2 Following an approach from the proposers of the memorial, Orkney Heritage Society (OHS) agreed to act as lead organisation, taking responsibility for all installation and maintenance costs and for any health and safety matters arising from the proposal.

5. REQUEST TO SITE MEMORIAL PLAQUE

- 5.1 A discrete memorial is proposed for Orkney taking the form of a simple, inscribed blue-grey stone rondel placed at ground level and Orkney Heritage Society favour a sundial, or similar motif because of the combined symbolism of sunlight as a natural, positive image, together with time as a healer.
- 5.2 The proposed site of the memorial plaque lies within an area of amenity land at the junction of King Haakon Street, Clay Loan and Dundas Crescent, Kirkwall, as shown in Appendix 1 to this report. The preferred location is within the small circular hedged area which marks the historic location of the town gallows.
- 5.3 OHS has promoted their proposal within the local community through radio and newspaper articles and has received positive feedback. OHS also consulted directly with the residents in the vicinity and received only one note of concern in respect of the wording which might be used on the memorial plaque.
- 5.4 OHS has consulted with Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council who were keen to support the installation of a “small, discrete memorial plaque or written inscription”.
- 5.5 The county archaeologist is confident that the proposal will not disturb any archaeology which may be present in the vicinity.
- 5.6 Local tour guides support the proposal and the historic events already feature in local tour guide activities, including an event in 2015, “Kirkwall Witchy Walk” which was part funded by the Kirkwall Townscape Heritage Initiative project.
- 5.7 The Minister of St Magnus Cathedral and church elders also support the proposal, as do the members of the Orkney Interfaith Group.

5.8 The installation of a memorial plaque at Gallow Ha, Kirkwall (Clay Loan), would not cause any difficulty for the Council and would provide a positive memorial to commemorate an important episode in Orkney's history. The installation and future maintenance will be the responsibility of OHS therefore there are no financial implications for the Council.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. LEGAL ASPECTS

7.1 It is noted from section 4.2 of this report that Orkney Heritage Society is to take responsibility for all installation and maintenance costs and any health and safety matters arising from the proposal. The Council should require the Society to enter into a Minute of Agreement to cover the Society's responsibility for maintenance, insurance, and any other necessary provisions.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS

8.1 Gillian Morrison, Executive Director of Corporate Services, Ext 2103,
email: gillian.morrison@orkney.gov.uk

8.2 Hayley Green, Head of Buildings and Facilities, Ext 2309,
email: hayley.green@orkney.gov.uk

8.3 Graeme Christie, Estates Manager, Ext 2303,
email: graeme.christie@orkney.gov.uk

9. APPENDIX

9.1 Appendix 1 – Location Plan and Photographs of Site at Gallow Ha' (Clay Loan), Kirkwall