

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OUTSIDE BODY REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 27

meeting date: TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2016
title: VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM
submitted by: COUNCILLOR JIM WHITE - ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members about the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) and to ask Members to consider whether to support the dedication of a tree on behalf of residents of the Ribble Valley, in May 2017.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To engage with all our communities to ensure we deliver services to meet customer needs and expectations.
- Corporate Priorities – To seek to continually improve, ensuring that council services are customer focused.
- Other Considerations – To meet our ongoing Commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant in the Ribble Valley.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The NMA is the UK's all-year round centre of remembrance. Spiritually uplifting, it honours the fallen, recognises sacrifice and service and fosters pride in our Country through over 340 memorials, plaques and visitor information. Set in superb grounds of 150 acres with over 30,000 maturing trees on the edge of the National Forrest at Arlewas near Lichfield, Staffordshire. The National Memorial Arboretum was established on ground kindly gifted by Tarmac with funding from the Millennium Commission and it is part of property managed by The Royal British Legion.

2.2 I visited on July 16 to gain further information and irrespective of the outcome of this report, am prepared to organise a non official visit to the NMA, at no cost or risk to the Council. This would be open to Councillors, Council staff and friends on a first come first served basis. There would be no official representation and would be at their own expense. (see attached Background Information).

2.3 MEMORIAL CHAPEL

The NMA has a 120 seat max capacity Memorial Chapel. At 1100hrs each day a short pre-recorded service is played for which early entry is advised. The Chapel can also be booked by groups at no cost for a maximum 15 minute service of their own.

Organised visits can include a ceremony/service at the site of any plaque/tree planting.

Clergy can be arranged but are dependent on availability, so the visitors are advised to arrange for their own clergy to accompany them on this visit.

Buglers for the sounding of the last post and reveille are allowed – one could be provided from the Ribble Valley if required (cost if any to be confirmed).

2.4 TREE PLANTING

The NMA do not allow individual tree planting. They have their own trees which can be dedicated by visiting groups. The NMA will work with groups and provide soil and spade etc for any dedications and photo shoots.

Two areas/locations have been pointed out by the Grounds Administrator (Ref C):

- Location 1 - An area known as Watersmeet or area 71. This location is in the North of the NMA in a rugged area which is fairly wild and overlooks the location of the joining of the River Trent and River Tame. It is one of the furthest areas away from the main visitor area and may remind visitors from the Ribble Valley of our own rivers and surrounding countryside. The trees in place here are mostly well established and there is a busy train line close by which again may remind others of our own BR link.
- Location 2 - An area known as Cherry Tree Avenue or area 66. This location is fairly central and is a new avenue of Cherry trees leading to The Gulf War memorial. The area has a backdrop of a working quarry which may remind some of the Ribble Valley's traditional quarrying areas. In addition there is fairly large shed which might be suitable should the weather be inclement and would be an ideal photo shoot venue. RVBC would be able to choose a certain cherry tree although the norm is for the NMA to allocate the next in line.

2.5 PLAQUES

Plaques can be placed in the NMA to mark the dedication of a tree. There is a pre-order time of at least 12 weeks, and they must meet NMA criteria for design and wording. The NMA only allows its own design of plaque of which there are 2 choices. As a Council we could use our own Coat of Arms with appropriate wording. These are costed as follows:

- £650 A5 Oval 40 words and background colouring.
- £840 A4 rectangular plaque, (landscape or portrait) inscription 80 words and artwork. (The background colour is your choice and they can do more than one colour - the lettering is always the silver of the base metal but the artwork is coloured)

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 Committee is asked to consider whether Ribble Valley Borough Council should arrange the dedication of a tree at the NMA on behalf of Ribble Valley residents at an approximate cost, inclusive of a plaque of either £650 or £840.

If Committee supports this proposal the Mayor and Mayoress would attend the dedication to represent the Ribble Valley.

A private trip could be organised to be scheduled to coincide with the dedication ceremony.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There is no allocated budget for the visit.
- Technical, Environmental and legal – none identified.
- Political – none identified.
- Reputation – the Council has a reputation for supporting the Armed Forces and Civilian Emergency services.
- Equality & Diversity – the Council should be consistent in its considerations of all groups.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Consider whether to support the proposal set out at 3.1 in this report.

5.2 Request that officers ensure funding for the dedication of a tree at the NMA be added to items considered for inclusion in the Budget for 2017 of this Committee.

Submitted on behalf of
COUNCILLOR J WHITE
ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

- REFERENCES: A: <http://www.thenma.org.uk/>
B: Meetings White/NMA staff 26 July 16
C: Rachael Haynes Grounds Administrator NMA (Plaques and Locations)
Tel 01283 245100 email rhaynes@thenma.org.uk
D: Claire Pickess AFM Administrator NMA (Visit Organiser)
Tel 01283 245136 email cpickiss@thenma.org.uk
E: Background Information re visit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1 ENTRY AND PARKING

- 1.1 There is no entry or parking costs for a coach, however a donation by individuals is recommended of £5 each. There is a £3 charge at a pay and display car park to visit in your own car.
- 1.2 Guide books cost £6.50 and visitor maps £3.

2 TRANSPORT

- 2.1 There is no budget allocated for a visit so individuals will be expected to meet the transport cost. Cllr White has been quoted a cost of £400 for a 49 seater coach by one local coach firm (this included a £100 discount). This could work out at approximately £10 per person if 40 people were interested.
- 2.3 Mobility scooters at NMA are available at a cost of £5 each but these must be booked in advance of the visit. The NMA does not allow personal mobility scooters. Wheelchairs can be booked with a donation, but not all areas are accessible. The NMA has a very detailed Access statement on their website at Reference A.
- 2.4 The NMA has a 50 minute Land train at a cost of £5 per adult (£2 per child), that can be booked on arrival by individuals and is very popular.
- 2.5 Guided buggy tours can also be arranged on the day by individuals at a cost of £5 per adult (£2 per child).
- 2.6 A shuttle buggy can be provided on the day if requested in advance from the main area to a specific tree planting area at a cost to be arranged.

3 DOGS

- 3.1 Only Guide Dogs are allowed.

4 REFRESHMENTS

- 4.1 Picnic areas are located close to the main buildings, however, there are plenty of benches around the NMA with no restrictions for visitors.
- 4.2 A well-stocked self-service cafeteria and restaurant are open every day 0900-1700hrs.
- 4.3 Private group meals can be arranged if desired. Costings and menus can be discussed upon request but this would have an effect on the overall costings per person.

5 DATES, BOOKING AND TIMINGS

- 5.1 A visit this year is not recommended. The main Armed Forces memorial is currently undergoing work (more names are being added by the stone mason), and a new restaurant, café, shop and visitor centre are under construction due for completion November 2016.

- 5.2 The NMA is a very popular location and booking and confirmation of visits/events must be made well in advance. In addition, a plaque would require a minimum 3 month lead time.
- 5.3 If Councillors wish to proceed a date of Saturday 6th May 2017 would be appropriate and available. This would be the last weekend in the current Mayor's year, and would leave plenty of time for arrangements to be made. The trees/flowers will be coming into bloom and the weather is more likely to be reasonable.
- 5.4 It takes approximately 2½ hours to travel to the NMA from the Ribble Valley. A 4 hour stay is recommended, so a 0900hrs departure time would see a return to Ribble Valley at approximately 1800hrs.