

## **Response to the Ely Centre re Enniskillen Memorial**

St Michael's Diocesan Trust is deeply conscious of the horrific effects and legacy of the Enniskillen Remembrance Day bomb in November 1987. As a charitable trust of a Christian Church community in Enniskillen, both it, and the parish community that it serves, are mindful of the horror and outrage experienced across the community and the many scars that remain to this day. The legacy of that awful event is still felt by victims personally and by the community at large. As the Diocesan Administrator, Monsignor Joseph McGuinness, stated in his letter to the people of St Michael's parish in November 2017, 'one of the ways in which we cope with grief and loss is in the creation of memorials for our loved ones.' Let us be very clear: the Trust has no objection to a permanent memorial being erected to the victims of the Enniskillen bombing. Mgr McGuinness also pointed out that when, on 26 September 2017, St Michael's Diocesan Trust first received an application for a permanent memorial to be erected on part of its property, it rightly agreed to give the proposal full and careful consideration. He also noted that a number of issues would have to be considered and that this would require time.

The proposal by the Ely Centre is to locate its memorial beside the front door entrance of the Clinton Centre, Belmore Street, Enniskillen, on private property that is held in trust by St Michael's Diocesan Trust on behalf of St Michael's Parish, Enniskillen and Lisbellaw.

### **Key Areas of Consideration**

In making this response, the Trust has taken advice and has given careful consideration to the issues already adverted to in previous statements, including the following:

- public access at and adjacent to the proposed location of this memorial
- the Trust's obligations to the Fermanagh University Partnership Board (FUPB) and the implications of the location of this memorial for the work of the Clinton Centre, as well as ongoing plans for the Centre.
- the responsibility for ongoing upkeep, maintenance, security and future sustainability of the memorial, as well as health and safety issues in general.

- potential future improvement works, including landscaping and streetscape improvement works in the centre of Enniskillen. It is noted that proposals in this area are current. The role of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council would be a key consideration here.

## **Response**

### Public Access:

The proposed siting of the memorial, the scale and footprint of which the Trust had not been made aware of until its unveiling in November 2017, is such that it would pose significant and insurmountable problems in terms of access to the Trust's property. The sheer size of the memorial, taken together with the high volume of footfall on the public footpath in front of the Clinton Centre, and the connected issues of access to the school at the side and rear of the building, would make the proposed location unsuitable from the point of view of the health and safety of the public. In this respect, it is important to note that two previous locations for the memorial, in the immediate vicinity, were turned down by DRD on these grounds.

### Obligations to Fermanagh University Partnership:

St Michael's Diocesan Trust has important and binding legal obligations to its tenant at the property concerned, namely the Fermanagh University Partnership Board (FUPB). The FUPB, through the Clinton Centre, has entered into an arrangement with three universities in order to provide a number of programmes centred on peace studies. These three universities, the University of Ulster, Dublin City University and the University of Massachusetts, with whom the FUPB has a Memorandum of Understanding, have recently announced plans for the regeneration of the Clinton Centre. This will integrate a memorial to the victims of the horrific attack. We are informed that development work will be commencing shortly and that this work will take approximately one year to complete. It is incumbent upon the Trust to respect the rights of its tenants and their freedom to conduct this development work as they see fit.

It is our view that not only does it not make sense to move to place a very large memorial in the proposed location, given the potential refurbishment of the entrance to the Clinton Centre, but we believe that visual and aesthetic considerations arising from the size and scale of the memorial mitigate against positioning it at this location.

#### Ongoing Upkeep and Sustainability:

In respect of the location of the memorial there are serious issues to be considered concerning ongoing upkeep, security and sustainability.

The proposed arrangement presupposes firstly: that a body (at present the Ely Centre) will continue to exist in perpetuity to take full responsibility for the ongoing upkeep, security and sustainability of the memorial, and, secondly: that the use (or at least the footprint) and ownership of the site remain unchanged well into the future. In particular, given that this memorial is proposed to be permanent (in perpetuity), such an arrangement would mitigate against any future re-development of the site.

It is to be noted that as a charitable trust, the Diocesan Trust has a fundamental responsibility to curate the assets entrusted to it with prudence and foresight.

#### Potential Future Public Works in the Area:

A further consideration in this response concerns the potential for future works in this area and in Enniskillen generally. The War Memorial occupies a point of spatial convergence within the core of the town. Given traffic flows and pedestrian footprint trajectories, together with the location of nearby businesses, schools, public buildings and homes, future streetscape works will continue to be an important factor in considering the location of any memorial or structure at this point.

In this respect, we note recent reports that ‘work is progressing on the planned multi-million facelift for Enniskillen town centre’ (Fermanagh Herald, 24 January 2018). The report goes on to state that the works will include ‘paving, landscaping and street lighting while street furniture will be installed at a number of locations to further enhance the town centre. Several

streets throughout the town will benefit including High Street, East Bridge Place and Belmore Street.’ It is to be noted too that this is a project which will involve the Department of Communities and also Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

## **Conclusion**

In responding to the Ely Centre request, the Diocesan Trust is sensitive to the legacy issues surrounding the Enniskillen Bomb. The trust has no objection to the erection of a memorial to the victims of that awful atrocity.

In reaching its conclusions, the Diocesan Trust has given careful consideration to key questions such as public access, its obligations to its tenants (the FUPB), the ongoing upkeep, security and sustainability of the memorial and potential future public works in the area. These considerations have made it manifestly clear that the sheer size and scale of the proposed memorial pose insurmountable problems in terms of access at the proposed site. Consideration of our obligations to the FUPB and the forthcoming re-development of the Clinton Centre, together with the visual and aesthetic considerations of such a large structure, also render this an unsuitable site for this memorial. The question of sustainability and of ongoing upkeep of the memorial is a serious concern to the Diocesan Trust. As noted, the Trust has an inescapable responsibility to curate the assets entrusted to it with prudence and foresight. The potential impact on the location of future streetscape and urban development works in the area has also been considered. It may also be noted that there was no consultation with the property owners, i.e. the Trust, before this memorial was commissioned and this has resulted in the structure and scale of the memorial not being physically suited to the site.

It should be clear from the foregoing that the Trust is not in a position to sanction the siting of this memorial as proposed. We are happy that the re-developed Clinton Centre will include a memorial to the victims of the Enniskillen bombing and the Trust hopes that a suitable location for the Ely Centre memorial will be found.

St Michael’s Diocesan Trust, and the Christian community it represents, will continue to assist in whatever way it can to further the continuing work for peace and reconciliation so

that all the families of those affected by the Enniskillen bombing and the wider Northern Ireland conflict can find the healing they need and deserve.