

# **NZ War Memorial Museum - Le Quesnoy**

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<b>TO</b>	Thames-Coromandel District Council
<b>FROM</b>	Kirsten Williamson - Principal Planner
<b>DATE</b>	28 May 2018
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>NZ War Memorial Museum - Le Quesnoy</b>

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## **1 Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to brief Council on the work of the New Zealand Memorial Trust in the French town of Le Quesnoy and to consider a commitment to funding to assist with the long term success of the New Zealand War Memorial Museum in Le Quesnoy.

## **2 Background**

Towards the end of World War I, the New Zealand division was ordered to liberate the historic, fortified French town of Le Quesnoy. Many French civilians were still living there under German occupation. Instead of destroying the town with heavy artillery fire, and putting those civilian lives at risk, the New Zealand troops, while under fire from German machine guns, used ladders to climb the historic ramparts and beat the Germans in a hand to hand battle. Not a single French civilian life was lost.

135 New Zealanders were killed that day. Since then the people of Le Quesnoy have maintained a deep respect for New Zealanders forging some special connections. Unlike other Commonwealth countries New Zealanders have no permanent place of remembrance on the Western Front.

## **3 Issue**

The New Zealand Memorial Trust is seeking support to establish the first permanent New Zealand War Memorial Museum in Europe, in the French town of Le Quesnoy and is seeking support from Thames-Coromandel District Council.

## **4 Discussion**

Recently the authorities of Le Quesnoy facilitated a generous property gift to the New Zealand Memorial Trust (Le Quesnoy) to create a permanent site of remembrance to honour the New Zealand sacrifice. The 1ha site includes a historic mansion, to be used as the main museum building and several smaller buildings which will be refurbished into self-catering accommodation.

The New Zealand Memorial Trust has embarked on a multi-year, \$15M project to complete the refurbishments and construct a second building to increase the museum floor area to an optimal size. The Museum will include modern, interactive displays of interest to visiting New Zealand school groups and outdoor displays among the grounds. The project is due to be publically launched in Le Quesnoy on 4 November 2018, marking the centenary of the famous battle.

The Memorial Trust is seeking assistance to aid with the success of this mission. Specifically, the Trust is looking for \$15M, \$3M of which has already been raised, to ensure the long-term success of the project. The Trust has already canvassed many local government authorities in New Zealand and there is wide agreement that a starting point could be \$1 per head, per ratepayer. As at February 2018 there are 27,247 rating units in

the District, which at \$1 per rating unit, would equate to \$27,247. A contribution of this nature by the Thames-Coromandel District would be recognised by a distinctive plaque at the museum.

Funding of this nature cannot be added to the Long Term Plan at this stage but could be funded from the 2018/19 surplus/deficit. If the Council is of a mind to support this project but doesn't want to commit ratepayer's money to it an alternative option could be to advertise the project within the District and promote the opportunity for individuals to donate to its cause.

## **5 Suggested resolution(s)**

That the Council:

1. Receives the 'NZ War Memorial Museum - Le Quesnoy' report.
2. Contributes a one-off sum of \$1 per ratepayer (a total of \$27,247) towards the New Zealand War Memorial Museum in Le Quesnoy, France from the 2017/18 surplus/deficit.