

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 4 October 2018

Proposal for a Conscientious Objectors Memorial in West Princes Street Gardens

Item number	7.7
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

This report asks Committee to note a proposal to construct a memorial to Conscientious Objectors and Opponents to War in West Princes Street Gardens and to agree that the service can progress with this proposal through the appropriate processes to installation. The proposed memorial will take the bronze form of a Handkerchief Tree, with a granite gabion seat.

Proposal for a Conscientious Objectors Memorial in West Princes Street Gardens

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Transport and Environment Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the proposal to construct a memorial to conscientious objectors in West Princes Street Gardens; and
 - 1.1.2 Agree that this proposal can be progressed through the appropriate processes to installation.

2. Background

- 2.1 On [25 August 2015](#) the Transport and Environment Committee considered a referral from the Petitions Committee to note the agreement that officers would report on the outcome of discussions with the principal petitioner for a memorial to Conscientious Objectors and the Opponents to War.
- 2.2 A series of discussions, meetings and correspondence between the petition representatives and Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries officers have taken place since that time regarding the potential location and design of the proposed memorial. From an early date the petitioner has indicated their preferred option would be within West Princes Street Gardens.
- 2.3 Progress updates were included as Business Bulletin items in [August 2016](#) and [May 2018](#).

3. Main report

- 3.1 A concept design proposal has now been submitted for consideration by officers and elected members (see Appendix 1). The concept is a 2m high bronze “Handkerchief Tree”, alongside which will be a 3m long curved granite gabion seat. The embroidered handkerchiefs will provide a personal and accessible way to convey the ongoing story of conscientious objection.
- 3.2 The petitioner’s preferred location within the gardens is between the Ross Fountain and Ross Bandstand, opposite the “The Call” War Memorial. However, this may be problematic as this location is frequently used for cultural events and commercial

activities and therefore discussions will continue in respect of the most appropriate location within this area of the Gardens.

- 3.3 If agreed by Committee, it is intended to progress the necessary permissions to install the monument by August 2019, in time for the centenary of the release of imprisoned WWI conscientious objectors. The intention is to gift the memorial to the city and place it under the Council's care.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 If Committee agree, to secure the necessary consents and to install the monument by August 2019.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The design and construction of the memorial will be funded by the Conscientious Objectors Memorial Partners. There will also be a requirement for the sponsors to contribute to the on-going maintenance of the memorial, most likely through a maintenance bond.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 These plans will be developed alongside emerging proposals for the development of the Ross Bandstand.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There is no direct equalities impact arising from this report.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There is no direct sustainability impact arising from this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 There has been no public consultation on the report recommendations.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 Conscientious Objectors Memorial Design Submission



CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS MEMORIAL

Conscientious Objectors Memorial Stage 1 Design Submission

Kate Ive Visual Artist

Memorial Partners

Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre
Edinburgh Stop the War
Iona Community
Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh
Pax Christi UK
Religious Society of Friends Scotland
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Workers Education Association Scotland
Scottish WILPF
Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop
University of Edinburgh,
Edinburgh College of Art, School of Art
School of Social and Political Science
St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School
Tynecastle Secondary School

Introduction

This document outlines the research, concepts, design and specifications for the proposed Conscientious Objectors' Memorial. Britain was the first country to recognise in law a right to refuse to take part in war. Nearly twenty thousand men refused to fight in the First World War and opposition to the war was widespread in Scotland. Yet recognition of opposition to war is notably absent from public space. The hope is for the Memorial to be located within West Princes Street Gardens by August 2019, the centenary of the end of imprisonment of First World War Conscientious Objectors (COs).

Objectives

- To create a memorial that shows the breadth of Conscientious Objection and contributions made by individuals and organisations that together seek peaceful alternatives to war
- Conscientious Objection is a personal choice, this memorial needs to reflect that by being personal and thought provoking, representing past, present and future COs
- To be non-judgemental, inclusive and welcoming with easy access physically and conceptually
- The memorial needs to be appropriate for its garden setting now and over years to come

Expected Outcomes

- A reflection space open to everyone that encourages discussions at all levels. Visitors will feel invited to contemplate the memorial's meaning in a welcoming and non-confrontational way
- A memorial of international significance that enhances Princes Street Gardens with a timeless aesthetic, created with community and specialist input

The Design Concept

The proposed design is inspired by an incident in the history of resistance to conscription during the First World War. In April 1916 the No-Conscription Fellowship, NCF, held an emergency assembly in London in support of Conscientious Objectors and war resisters. An aggressive crowd gathered outside threatening to break in and violently disrupt the meeting. The chairman of the convention asked the 2000 strong audience to show their support for the speakers silently so that their cheers would not further anger the crowd outside.

'No-one who was present will forget the effect of this; and the distinguished speakers were greeted with thousands of fluttering handkerchiefs, making the soft sound of a rising and falling breeze.'

-Peace Pledge Union website

Community Engagement

A Steering Group representing civil society and peace groups, led by the Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre, is working to create the Memorial. A design competition was held with four shortlisted artists invited to create designs. The winning design and photos presented here are the work of Edinburgh artist Kate Ive.

Research & Consultation

The proposed design was created through in depth research and consultation with specialist groups, including the CO Memorial Steering Group, expert historians, Adult Learners (WEA) studying Conscientious Objection, local and regional archives and input from a present day international CO.

Workshops & Exhibition

A series of workshops inspired by the memorial design are proposed to take place in Scotland. Open to all ages, these workshops will encourage participants to consider the content of the memorial and create their own piece of related artwork. The workshops will be aimed at skill sharing, creating new discussions around alternatives to war. The artworks created by workshop participants could be exhibited alongside the creation of the Memorial.

A Site of Learning Engagement

A linked website will document all stages of the creation of the memorial, including the research, community input and fabrication as well as stories of First World War COs from Scotland and contemporary international COs.

Historic & Social Context



WW1 Handkerchief



Dyce Quarry CO emblem



Womens Peace Crusade



Friends Ambulance Unit

Embroidered Handkerchiefs

The historical use of embroidered war handkerchiefs is a means of creating visual records of moments in history and narratives.

'Many handkerchiefs were produced during the First World War with designs that commemorated or recorded aspects of war. They were commercially produced for soldiers to carry with them or to give to those back home as mementos' - The National Archives

The proposed sculpture is a bronze Handkerchief Tree' adorned with embroidered handkerchiefs cast in bronze. Embroidered handkerchiefs are a personal and accessible way to convey the ongoing story of Conscientious Objection.

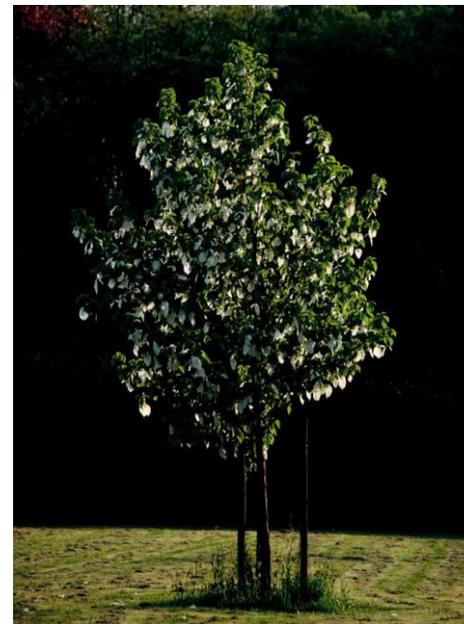
Each embroidered handkerchief will represent an aspect of Conscientious Objection to convey the broad spectrum and history of Conscientious Objection and opposition to war.

The handkerchief embroidery could include names of men and women war resisters who were imprisoned, and emblems of international organisations dedicated to Conscientious Objection, peacebuilding and conflict resolution in ascending time order with First World War COs on lower branches and some near the top, left blank to suggest future peacemakers.

Possible Handkerchief designs



Handkerchief Tree in bloom with white bracts and leaves

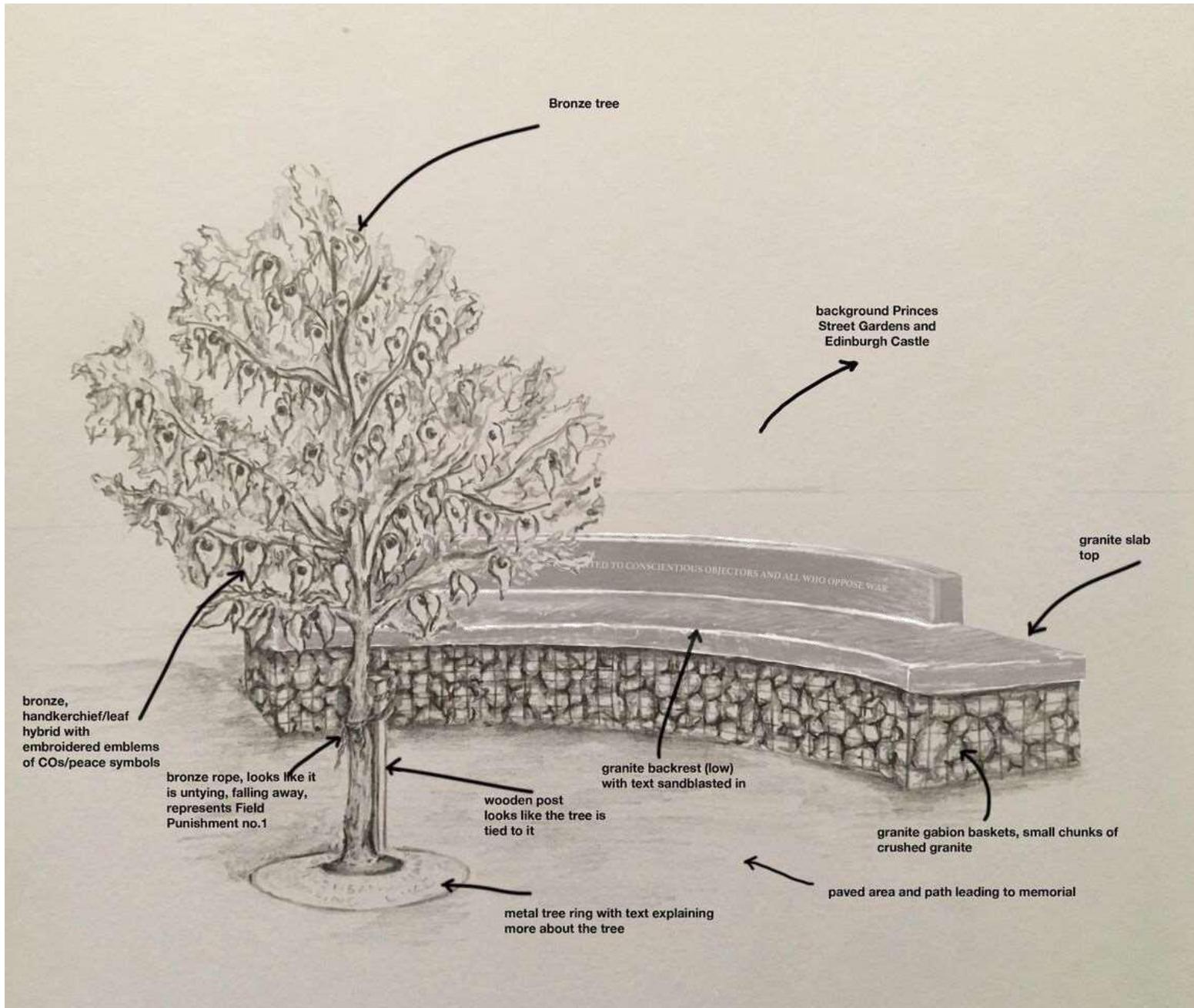


Handkerchief Tree/Dove Tree

Davidia involucreata is called the Handkerchief Tree as the tree's white bracts flutter like 'thousands' of white handkerchiefs in a gentle breeze, reminiscent of the 1916 No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) assembly audience and their thousands of fluttering white handkerchiefs. The tree is also known as the Dove Tree or Peace Tree because of the story of a woman who brought peace between warlords in 15th century China.

Although it does grow in the UK and there is one in the Botanic Gardens, the spectacular Handkerchief Tree is unusual and is not common in gardens. A deciduous tree, it produces these white bracts (handkerchiefs) and flowers in May when international Conscientious Objection Day is celebrated.

The powerful visual of the fluttering handkerchiefs of the NCF audience and white tree bracts connects very strongly with WHY's vision for Princes Street Gardens and the Butterfly/Pavilion. They envisage 'the fluttering canvas and heraldry of a field campaign' and how butterflies 'flutter and float over the landscape'. -WHY Booklet



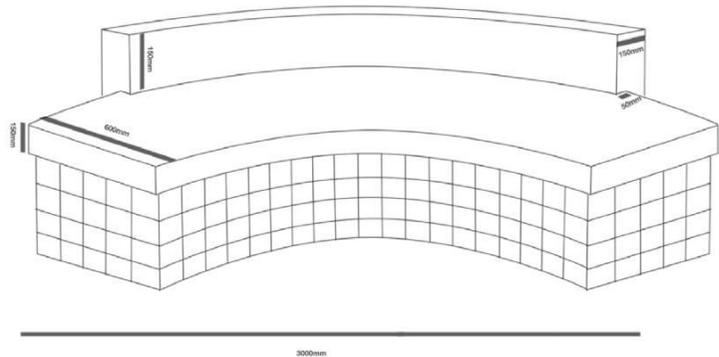
Technical Drawings

Engineering drawings and certification will be available in place of these images when requested.

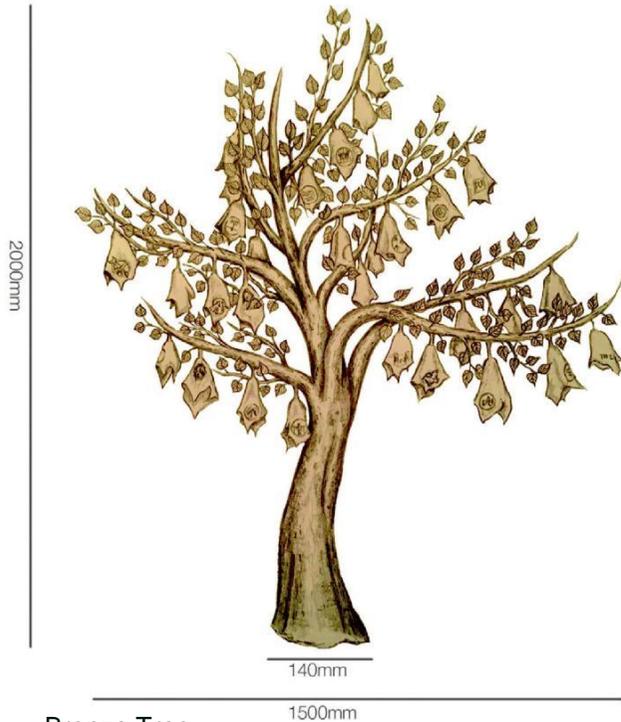
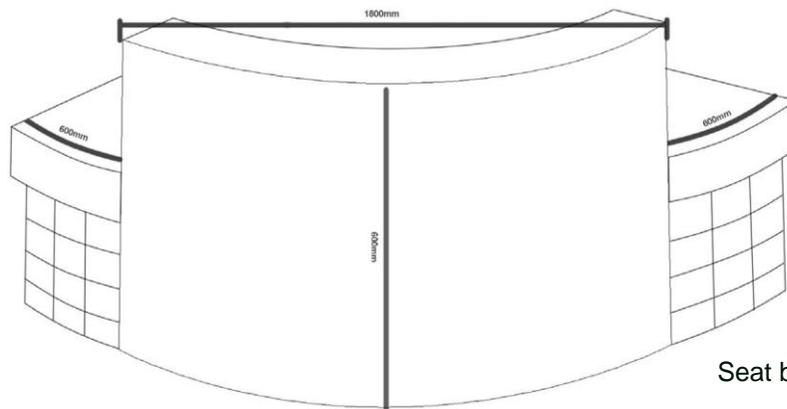
Connection of seat back



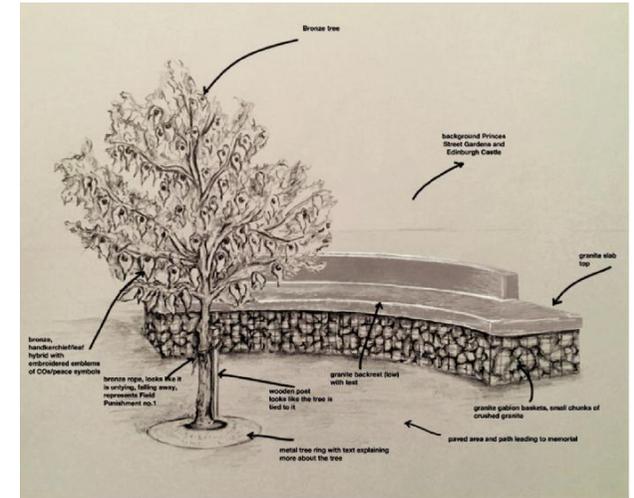
Seat front



Seat back for text



Bronze Tree



Dimensions

- Tree: 2m (h) x 1.5 (w) canopy span
- Tree Ring: 900mm diameter
- Gabion Seat: 3m x 0.6m curved

All fits within 4m x 4m footprint and is no higher than 2m. Orientation of the memorial will be with the tree open to the garden.



Materials

Handkerchief Tree

The bronze cast tree will contain an engineer-approved structural stainless steel armature, making it robust enough for display in a public space. The bronze handkerchiefs and bronze leaves will be welded permanently to the tree branches. Designed with its public setting in mind, there will be no sharp points/edges. At 2m high the detailed handkerchiefs will be visible to visitors at all levels.

Tree Ring

There will be a tree ring around the base of the bronze tree made from durable CorTen steel with jet-cut information about the memorial, the Handkerchief Tree and the address of the memorial website.

Gabion Seat

There will be a reflection space with a seat made from Aberdeen Granite. Inspired by WWI COs at Dyce Granite Work Camp, the seat top will rest on a granite gabion. A small number of quotations could be added to the back of the seat.

Access

The approximate proposed site is indicated on the map on the previous page. The site will be paved for disabled access.

Timescale

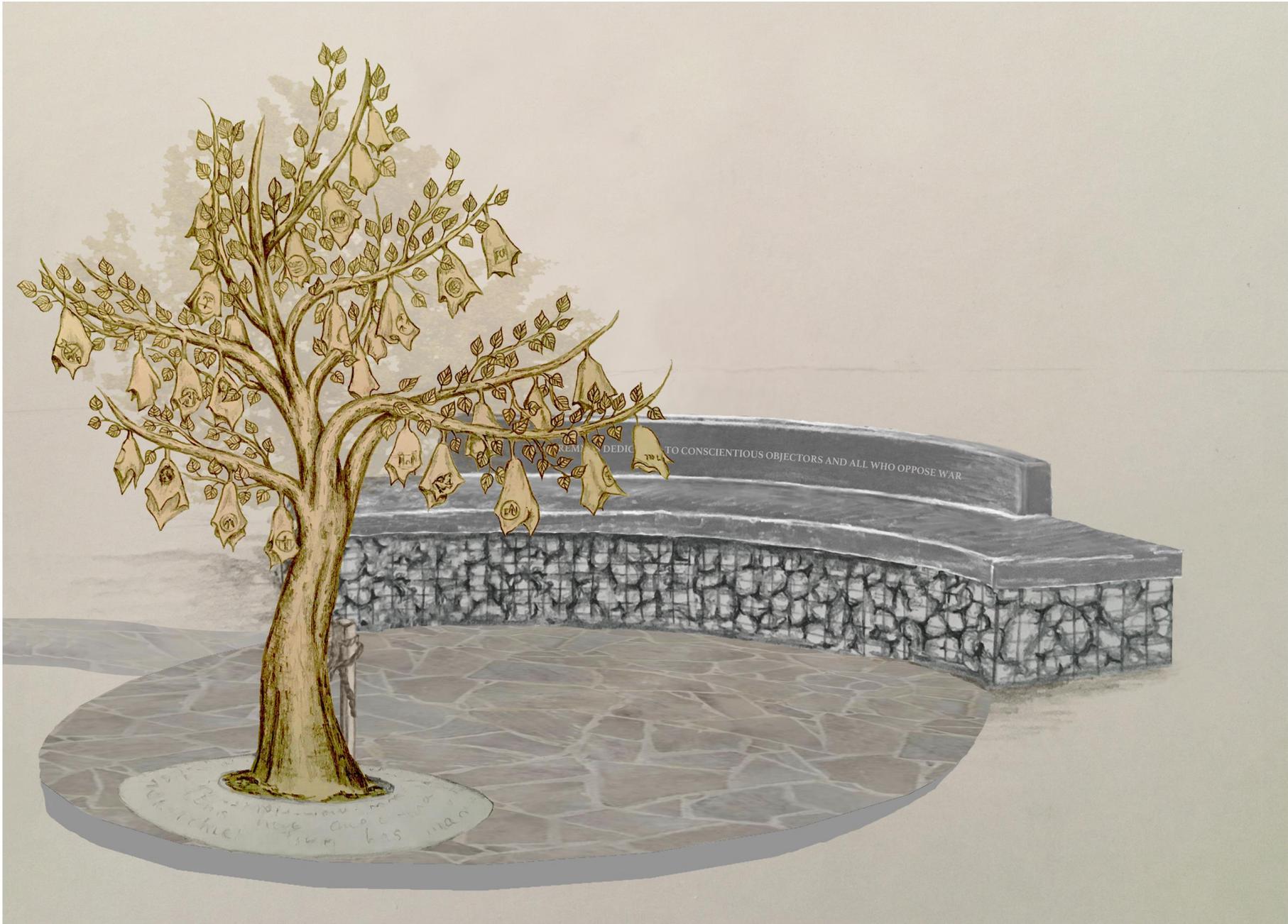
The memorial will be created over the course of the next year, with time and dedication given to each stage of the development and production, ensuring the highest quality results. It is foreseen that the memorial will be installed in August 2019 in time for the centenary of the release of WWI COs from prison.

Ownership & Maintenance

Ownership will pass to CEC upon completion. The memorial is designed to require the minimum amount of maintenance. Without upkeep, the bronze patina will naturally change. Due to the organic form of the sculpture this will further enhance the work.



The Handkerchief Tree



Memorial Illustration