

# The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Tuesday, 30 June 2020

## Friendship Agreement with Contalmaison

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|---------------------|-----------|
| Item Number         | 8.5       |
| Executive/routine   | Executive |
| Wards               | All       |
| Council Commitments |           |

### 1. Recommendations

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1.1 The Council is recommended to:

- Approve the proposed Friendship Agreement with Contalmaison;
- Endorse that the Lord Provost formally signs this on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council.

**Andrew Kerr**

Chief Executive

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# Report

## Friendship Agreement with Contalmaison

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report proposes that the City of Edinburgh Council enters into a Friendship Agreement, on behalf of Edinburgh, with Contalmaison, a village in the North of France, in recognition of the long standing ties between both communities and in recognition of the shared history they possess.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh, represented by the Council and particularly through the civic leadership of the Lord Provost, Depute Lord Provost and the Baillies have, for a number of years, ensured that the special ties between the two communities have been sustained and that the anniversary of the commencement of the Battle of the Somme and, particularly the engagement at Contalmaison, on 1 July has been commemorated in person.
- 3.2 Owing to the unique and exceptional circumstances that have occurred globally in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, representation in person for the anniversary of the battle and the associated memorial events will not be possible. Consequently, the Lord Provost has proposed that a Friendship Agreement be drawn up for formal approval by the Council, with the intention that this be signed jointly by the Lord Provost as the civic leader of the City and the Mayor of Contalmaison. This Friendship Agreement would not have any formal legal status but would be an important symbol and signal of the ongoing relationship between Edinburgh and Contalmaison.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 The Battle of the Somme during the First World War saw 20,000 killed and 40,000 wounded in the space of an hour on the first morning. This included a toll of 500 from Edinburgh, Midlothian and Fife who were killed and some 800 who were wounded. The casualty levels continued to mount throughout the first day of fighting, on 1 July 1916, and this included the specific sacrifice of a number of young men from Edinburgh at the village of Contalmaison.
- 4.2 The village of Contalmaison, in the North of France, saw a great deal of fighting and was one of the key allied objectives during the first Battle of the Somme. The advance from the British lines on Contalmaison was led by the 34<sup>th</sup> Division, a New

Army Formation which had been recruited in Edinburgh, Northumberland, Grimsby and Cambridge, elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots, “McCrae’s Battalion” and of the Tyneside Irish battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers. They succeeded in penetrating the defences that same day, before being outnumbered and forced to withdraw by the opposing German forces.

- 4.3 The “McCrae’s Battalion” connection to Edinburgh is particularly poignant and important for the City. This was a volunteer battalion of the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots formed by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George McCrae who rallied the men of Edinburgh to enlist beside him. It was also referred to as “The Sporting Battalion” because of the high number of professional sportsmen drawn from a number of football clubs, notably Heart of Midlothian FC and Hibernian FC, along with a number of other sporting clubs from across the City and beyond.
- 4.4 In 2004 the McCrae’s Battalion Great War Memorial, designed by the historian Jack Alexander, was unveiled. This memorial cairn was first proposed by the survivors of the battle in 1919 and, as such, is considered to be the last of the Great War memorials to have been built. The service and sacrifice of the Battalion continue to be remembered and deserves to be commemorated by the Council, this year as in any other. The proposed friendship agreement will act as a lasting signal of our respect and remembrance, complemented by future visits to the Memorial Cairn when circumstances again permit this.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Subject to the Council’s approval of the proposed Friendship Agreement, the Lord Provost will formally sign this agreement on behalf of the City of Edinburgh and this will be shared with the Mayor of Contalmaison to sign on behalf of the community.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Not applicable at this stage.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 Not applicable.

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Proposed Friendship Agreement with Contalmaison.

**Appendix 1 – Draft Friendship Agreement between the City of Edinburgh and the Village of Contalmaison**

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH, herein represented by the Frank Ross, Rt Hon Lord Provost,

AND

THE VILLAGE OF CONTALMAISON within the Region of Hauts-de-France herein represented by Mayor Mdme Jocelyne Gougeon

On 1 July 2020, we commit formally to this enduring agreement of friendship and mutual respect between the City of Edinburgh and the Village of Contalmaison and our respective peoples, in memory of all those who served and sacrificed themselves during a time of great war and strife, particularly the young men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots, so that we could all benefit from a free, fair and democratic way of life in the future.

The fact that our two communities are bound together through ties of blood does not diminish over time, it only grows stronger and deeper. By further cementing our mutual respect through this agreement, we ensure that, although some memories may fade over time, we will never forget, and we will remember and commemorate them each year.

**Signed**

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**For and on behalf of  
the City of Edinburgh**

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**For and on behalf of  
the Village of Contalmaison**