

**Title:** Makaraka Cemetery – Uplifting of Headstones Project Update

**Section:** Liveable Communities

**Prepared by:** Rebecca Kinsella (Community Property & Projects Officer)

**Meeting Date:** 21 March 2018

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Legal     Financial     Significance = Medium

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## Report to **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES** Committee for information

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Uplifting of Headstones Project at Makaraka Cemetery.

Gisborne District Council staff have been working with the Friends of Makaraka Cemetery Trust (the Trust) and key community stakeholders to uplift approximately ninety (90) headstones and headstone material that is buried at Makaraka Cemetery.

A number of key milestones have been reached in the progression of this project, with the next phase, uplifting the headstones, due to commence in April 2018.

The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **Medium** significance in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That the Community Development & Services Committee:**

- 1. Notes the contents of this report.**

Authorised by:



Garrett Blair  
Contracts & Asset Manager



Andrew White  
Director Liveable Communities

## **BACKGROUND**

1. In February 2010 Council received a request from the Gisborne branch of the NZ Society of Genealogists to consent to uplift approximately 90 headstones and headstone pieces that were buried at Makaraka Cemetery. Council resolved to support this project to be managed by the group, and that Council would support them in seeking funding from other sources.
2. After investigation into the project a report to Council (12/397) in July 2012, provided the recommendation that Council continue to support the project in principle, but decline further operational support until adequate funding levels are obtained to allow Council to complete its associated statutory obligations. It was moved that this recommendation be "left to lie on the table", and it was decided that a position paper be prepared to set out what is required by each of the parties involved.
3. In September 2012, it was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be developed by Gisborne District Council covering the relationship between Council and the Society of Genealogists. In November 2012, it was outlined that it was not the role of the NZ Society of Genealogists to be involved in the uplifting of the headstones project. This meaning that the local branch could not be involved either. The local branch outlined intentions to continue the project in a private capacity and form a dedicated organisation to undertake the project. The group formed The Friends of Makaraka Cemetery Trust.
4. A submission was received for the 2015–2025 Long Term Plan from the Trust asking for permission to undertake the project to uplift the buried headstones. Council resolved to support the project of uplifting the headstone by supplying a "digger" for the project.
5. Council staff were approach by the Trust in regard to further progressing this project in 2015.
6. The Friends of Makaraka Cemetery are a registered Charitable Trust and this allows Council to progress with entering into a formal agreement with the group to undertake the project.
7. A working group was established in April 2017, which includes the Trust and other key stakeholders who have an invested interest in the project.
8. Over the last year, a number of meetings have been held with Council staff, the Trust, and members of the working group. These meetings and discussions have allowed for understanding the history of the project, and have outlined the required process that needs to be followed to move forward in completing the project.

## **DISCUSSION and OPTIONS**

### **Project Update**

9. Council officers have undertaken engagement with Iwi from both Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Rongowhakaata. Both Iwi groups support the project and are joining the working group as the project progresses towards the uplifting phase.
10. Council staff have been working closely with Heritage NZ to determine requirements that need to be met as part of the project. Heritage NZ would like to be part of the project implementation and are planning to have a representative on site during excavation to provide support.
11. The resource consent (LU-2018-108060-00) to undertake the uplifting project was granted on 12 February 2018.
12. Council's legal team have updated the original agreement that was drafted in 2012. This was to ensure both Council and the Trust meet all regulatory and legislative requirements.

The agreement also covers aspects such as transportation and storage of the headstones by the Trust.

13. The Trust have undertaken extensive communication with the relatives of headstone owners and have obtained all possible consents to undertake the excavation.
14. The relatives of headstone owners were asked to provide consent for the Trust to act on their behalf to undertake the uplifting of the headstones. Relatives were given three options to choose from in regard to the treatment of their headstone after excavation. A summary of the options provided and the selection made by relatives is detailed below
  - **Option One:** Headstone to remain in the trench. No relatives selected this option.
  - **Option Two:** Headstone removed from trench, and potentially included as part of a proposed memorial. Sixty eight (68) relatives selected this option.

The proposed memorial which is provided as part of Option 2 is outside the current scope of this project, and further progression on this will be undertaken once the uplifting is completed and the condition of the headstones is determined.

- **Option Three:** Headstone removed from trench, and potentially placed back on original site within the cemetery. Eight relatives have selected this option, but also want to see what condition the headstone is in once removed from the trench before making a final decision.
15. There are ten headstones without relative consent. This is due to factors such as no living relatives can be found, or contact with a relative has been unsuccessful. It has been advised by Council's legal department that these ten headstones will be held in secure storage managed by Council. It has also been recommended as per Clause 4. of The Burial and Cremation (removal of monuments and tablets) Regulations 1967, that Council advertises information about this process through local publications, on a minimum of four occasions. If the owner of the headstone is unable to be identified, then the headstone will be included in the same process as the majority of all the other headstones, which is Option two.
  16. At this stage the excavation is planned to take place in April 2018.

## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria	This Report	The Process Overall
The effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district	Low	Low
The effects on individuals or specific communities	Medium	Medium
The level or history of public interest in the matter or issue	Medium	Medium
Inconsistency with Council's current strategy and policy	Low	Low
Impacts on Council's delivery of its Financial Strategy and Long Term Plan.	Low	Low

16. The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **low** significance in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

17. Extensive community engagement has been undertaken as part of this project. It is a project being led by very passionate stakeholders and has obtained a large amount of support from other affected parties.

## CONSIDERATIONS

### Financial/Budget

18. A submission was received for the 2015–2025 Long Term Plan from the Trust, which Council committed to support by supplying a “digger” to the project. Therefore, committing to supporting the excavation aspect of the project.

### Legal

19. Council's legal team have updated the draft agreement document that will support the Trust to implement this project. The final agreement outlines all regulatory and legislative requirements that will need to be adhered to by the Trust while undertaking the project.

## POLICY and PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

20. Support for this project is consistent with the 2015-2025 Long Term Plan.

## RISKS

21. Weather conditions have been favourable this summer and therefore the ground conditions are suitable to undertake the project as soon as feasible. There is a risk that unforeseen delays (for example due to poor weather conditions) could result in adverse soil conditions, which may make the area unsafe for excavation. It is important to undertake the excavation and removal of headstones as soon as possible to mitigate this risk.

## NEXT STEPS

Date	Action/Milestone	Comments
April 2018	Undertake Excavation	Those involved in this process will be council staff, The Friends of Makaraka Cemetery, key stakeholders, Heritage NZ, and engaged contractor.
June 2018	Undertake advertising in regards to unclaimed headstones	Local Publications