

Title of Report:	Garvagh Bomb Memorial
Committee Report To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 October 2025
For Decision	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Good Relations Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	approx £10K TBC on procurement
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	n/a

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	unconfirmed

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date: 30/09/25
	EQIA Required and Completed:	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	<u>Yes/No</u>	Date:

1. Purpose

The members consider approval of the contents of this report regarding a memorial to the 1973 Garvagh bomb.

Council's Memorial Working Group met on Monday 29th September 2025 and have recommended the following report for council's consideration, having discussed this proposal over a number of meetings. Of note, the Working Group, although not quorate, were minded proceeding to committee to avoid any further delays regarding the proposal, save one member. Draft notes from the meeting in **Annex A**, outlines further details.

2. Background /Context

Notice of Motion first brought to Council in December 2022

A car bomb exploded on the 23rd of July 1974 in Garvagh town killing a Corporal in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) John Conley (43), as he was trying to evacuate the area. A Notice of Motion was brought forward to council and was subsequently agreed in February 2023 for 'Council to place a fitting and permanent memorial on or near the Garvagh War memorial to all who served and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice (John Conley). 24 Platoon E company (Garvagh Detachment), 5th County Londonderry Battalion, The Ulster Defence Regiment (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross) 1970 - 1992 and a plaque at Bridge Street Garvagh the site of the bombing.'

2.1. Consultation

The public consultation was carried out as an independent process.

Consultation included:

- a. Interviews: 24 x one-on-one interviews were conducted with stakeholders.
- b. Focus Group (1): PP Presentation and discussion with 24 x attendees.
- c. Focus Group (2): PP Presentation and discussion with 8 x attendees
- d. Online survey via Survey Monkey – 7 responses received.

A number of participants in the consultation included:

- a. Family members of John Conley
- b. Garvagh War Memorial Trustees
- c. UDR Association/Royal British Legion Members (Garvagh and Coleraine)
- d. Garvagh Museum Trustees

2.2. Consultation Outcome

All participants in the consultation supported implementing the notice of motion through the installation of a **plaque honouring those who served** and a **plinth in memory of John Conley**.

It was proposed that a **permanent plaque** be installed on **Bridge Street** to mark the site of the **bombing on 23 July 1974**. Those who took part in the consultation unanimously agreed that the event should be formally acknowledged and commemorated. They further recommended that the **Conley family** should lead on the **design, wording, and location** of any plaque or plinth dedicated to **John Conley**, who tragically lost his life as a result of the bombing. Participants also offered their views on potential **locations** for the memorial.

2.3. Location

Several concerns were voiced in respect to the placing of a plaque at the site of the bombing in Bridge Street:

- The building formerly occupied by TBF Thompson Ministries on Bridge Street, at the site of the bombing, is currently closed and for sale. There is concern that any future redevelopment could result in the fixture being damaged or permanently removed. There is no suitable alternative location further up Bridge Street due to the presence of three larger electrical installations along the footpath.
- The Bridge Street site experiences lower footfall and visibility compared with Main Street.
- Installing a fixture in the ground, similar to the approach used in Coleraine, is not feasible here because the area is tarmac. Placement on tarmac is not recommended as it would be difficult to install safely and maintain. Additionally, any redevelopment could alter the tarmac, potentially damaging the marker, or result in its removal without reinstallation.

3. Plaque to those who served

Consultation feedback indicated a preference for a memorial honouring all who served and those who lost their lives as per Council's Notice of Motion, with a UDR Memorial suggested to be placed on or near the existing War Memorial in Garvagh. Those who served in the UDR, including members of the Garvagh Detachments and the UDR Association in Coleraine, favoured a plaque on the War Memorial featuring the wording outlined in the Notice of Motion, flanked by the Ulster Defence Regiment Badge and the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross Badge. This approach was supported by the majority of individuals interviewed and by the Focus Groups. As a contingency, it was proposed that the plaque be installed on the Garvagh Museum wall behind the War Memorial if permission for placement on the memorial itself is not granted.

3.1. War Memorial Trust response

The location of the plaque on the War Memorial was initially agreed with Garvagh Memorial Trustees, based on the space available, the visibility from the street, and the appropriateness of how it 'sits' alongside other commemorative names on the War Memorial. Permission to place the plaque directly on the War Memorial was sought from the War Memorial Trust, however this request was declined stating that in line with conservation practise, the new plaque would be best placed on the Museum wall and not directly on the war memorial.

As a result, the contingency plan is to install the UDR plaque on an exterior wall of the Garvagh Museum, situated directly behind the War Memorial.

3.2. Permission from Garvagh Museum Trustees

A confirmation email has been received from Ian Davidson, Garvagh Museum Trustee / Treasurer stating the following:

"Garvagh Museum is content to have erected a plaque or plinth to the late Corporal John Conely on or adjacent to the external Museum Wall in the area of the town War Memorial. Subject to written content being approved."

Garvagh Museum is content to have erected a plaque or plinth to the 'Garvagh Detachment' of 'E' Company the 5th (County Londonderry) Battalion The Ulster Defence Regiment on or adjacent to the external Museum Wall in the area of the town War Memorial. Subject to written content being approved."

Garvagh Museum is not content to approve memorials of fatalities of terrorist actions unless they were serving members of the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom or Royal Ulster Constabulary and that they must have served or lived in the Garvagh District."

Any future requests for this type of accommodation must have CC&G Council approval before Museum approval could be considered".

4. Plinth to John Conley

The consultation concluded that a permanent plinth commemorating John Conley, and the bombing should be located to the left of the War Memorial, opposite the UDR plaque (if the plaque is installed on the War Memorial). The wording for the plinth was agreed with the Conley family.

Several options for the plinth and its location, along with associated risks, were presented to the Memorial Working Group. Council officers examined these options in greater detail and reported their findings back to the group.

Taking the identified risks into account, the Memorial Working Group recommends the contingency option outlined in the consultation final report: installing the memorial plinth on confirmed third-party land, specifically DFI land beside the War Memorial facing Garvagh Main Street. This is subject to DFI approval following submission of a planning application. The Conley family has been consulted on this contingency option and have expressed their support.

An artist's impression of both the proposed plaque and the plinth are attached in **Annex B**.

5. Planning

Planning approval is required for both a plaque on the Museum Wall as well and the memorial plinth. The current time for processing a planning application could take approximately 16 weeks.

While DfI Roads would be consulted as part of the planning process, it is recommended that their estates/ land and property section is contacted ahead of applying.

6. Legal agreement

Should Council proceed with the proposed options, a formal legal contract will be agreed between Council and The Garvagh Museum trustees for the plaque and Council and DFI for the plinth.

As per the previous Coleraine Bomb Memorial, it is also recommended that Council agrees to maintenance, repair and insuring the plaque on the Museum Wall and the plinth on DFI land.

It is recommended that the contract include:

- a. A fixed term is agreed of 50 years, which can be extended later, rather than leaving it open ended.
- b. Council agrees to maintain and repair the plaque and plinth, including cleaning etc.
- c. Council agrees to insuring the plaque and plinth against Public Liability.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that the following options for a plaque and plinth are considered by members for approval.

7.1. Plaque to be placed on Garvagh Museum Wall.

Plaque wording:

To all who served and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

24 Platoon E company (Garvagh Detachment), 5th County Londonderry Battalion,

The Ulster Defence Regiment (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross) 1970 - 1992.

The UDR Badge and Conspicuous Gallantry Cross Badge, placed on either side of the plaque

7.2. Plinth to be placed beside the War Memorial, on DFI land facing Garvagh Main Street.

Plinth wording:

In Memory of

24273213 Corporal John Conley (43)

Ulster Defence Regiment

Who tragically lost his life on 23rd July 1974

As a result of a terrorist bomb on Bridge Street, Garvagh,

while courageously aiding others.

A devoted husband and father of three

Annex A



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

**Notes of Memorial Advisory Group
29th September 2025, 7pm
MS Teams**

Present

Members: Councillor Huggins (Chair), Councillor Archibald, Councillor Kyle

Officers: P. Harkin Good Relations Manager, S. Calvin Museum Manager, Z. Torrens Business Support Officer

NO.		ACTIONS
1.	Welcome	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Memorial Advisory Group. The chair informed members that the meeting was not quorate and sought agreement from Members to proceed with the meeting which would provide members with an update. All were in agreement.	Chair to discuss quorum with CEO
2.	Apologies	
	Councillor Kane Councillor Watton	
3	Notes of Previous Meeting – 28th August 2025	
	Notes of the meeting were previously circulated and noted.	
4.	Garvagh Memorial Report	
	The Good Relations Manager provided an update. Garvagh Museum Trust have provided email conformation that they approve the Memorial plaque being placed on the Garvagh museum wall.	

Annex A

NO.		ACTIONS
	Memorial Plinth; Council officers liaised with the land and property solicitor regarding gaining possessory title of the land which was currently unregistered and who provided the following information; • The possession of the land must be 'adverse' i.e. without the owner's consent • The claimant must have factual possession of the whole of the land they are adversely claiming. This is usually demonstrated by the claimant exercising a sufficient degree of exclusive physical custody and control over the land, dealing with it as an owner would (although it need not be apparent to others inspecting the land that it has been adversely possessed) • The individual must show an intention to possess the land in his own name, on his own behalf and to the exclusion of all others, including the title owner. This can be demonstrated for example by fencing off the land, and/or placing a lock on the only entrance/exit to it • The possession must be continuous/uninterrupted for a specified period of time. The requisite period would be 12 years. Council cannot provide this. The two remaining options; Option C Install the plinth memorial on confirmed third party lands i.e. DFI lands, at the opposite side to the proposed option A. This would be subject to DFI approval once a planning application is submitted. This has been discussed with DFI who have informed officers that they don't make a decision until an application has been submitted for planning. Option D	

Annex A

NO.		ACTIONS
	Gain approval from the Garvagh Museum and place a 2nd plaque on the Museum Wall. Option D has not been discussed with the family as this was not presented during consultation. Option C is the contingency option preferred by the family / those consulted. Planning permission is required for both the plaque and the plinth. One application would be submitted for both elements at a cost of £1,010. The timeframe for processing an application is currently 16 weeks. The Chair asked whether the Garvagh Memorial project is now ready to be brought before Council and if it can proceed despite the meeting not being quorate. It was agreed that the project should proceed without further delay and that a report be presented to the Leisure and Development Committee. Councillor Archibald requested it be noted that she did not support the recommendations, stating that there may be more appropriate remembrance approaches that should be considered. The Chair reminded officers to be mindful that the site designated for the Christmas tree is located in front of the War Memorial.	Report to be taken to L&D committee October meeting
5.	Update on Portballintrae Airforce Memorial Application	
	The Museum Manager provided an update on Portballintrae Airforce Memorial Application. The group have now submitted a planning application and that the Museums manager will discuss with the group to ensure that insurance is in place. The report for this application will be taken to the Leisure & Development committee.	Report to L&D committee meeting
6.	Update on Mark Ashton Memorial	
	The Good Relations Manager provided an update in the Mark Ashton applications.	

Annex A

NO.		ACTIONS
	A second application has been submitted requesting a plaque sited in Portrush Town Hall. Funds are available for this project. The family are in support of this application. The Head of Tourism & Recreation provided an update prior to the meeting regarding the application to Antrim Gardens. <i>“As you know, progression was subject to working with and evolving the proposals from Portrush Heritage Group. Due to the expected timeline requirements, if this application needs to progress in the interim, I would propose a temporary memorial (subject to community consultation completed) , with a view to a permanent memorial once funding has been secured.”</i> It was discussed that two applications for the same memorial could not be taken forward to council and there is a need to engage with the first applicant on one memorial.	Head of T&R to engage with the applicant.
7.	Any Other Relevant Business	
	There was no further business to discuss.	
8.	Date of Next Meeting	
	The next meeting scheduled on 8th October is cancelled. The next meeting will be held on 12th November 2025, MS Teams.	

Meeting closed at 19.25

DRAFT

Annex B

Matthew Wilson - May 2025

Garvagh Memorial Causeway Coast and Glens Council

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Artist Impressions

The proposed memorial project will be split in two pieces set within the area adjacent to the existing War Memorial in Garvagh town centre.

Design for Corporal John Conley Memorial

Specification

Granite pillar constructed of dark grey South African granite or similar with a matte brushed/sandblasted finish - an appropriate match should be found to retain similarity to existing memorial situated opposite

The pillar will sit upon a small base constructed of split cut basalt with hammer brushed finish - appropriate match found to retain likeness to basalt present throughout War Memorial

Approx. 2mm laser etched 316 marine grade brushed stainless steel plaque affixed to pillar face
Steel will be cut, bevelled, drilled, deburred and finally engraved before mounting with an engraved text depth of approx. 0.02mm as appropriate

The granite sides of the pillar will be engraved with floral motifs selected by the family; these will echo Conley's rural life and offer a quiet motif of reflection and remembrance. The pieces may feature a range of flowers/wild grasses but must feature a minimum of three poppies and three forget me nots amongst this.

An appropriate attachment should be included on front face of the pillar or to wall above for wreath hanging by family

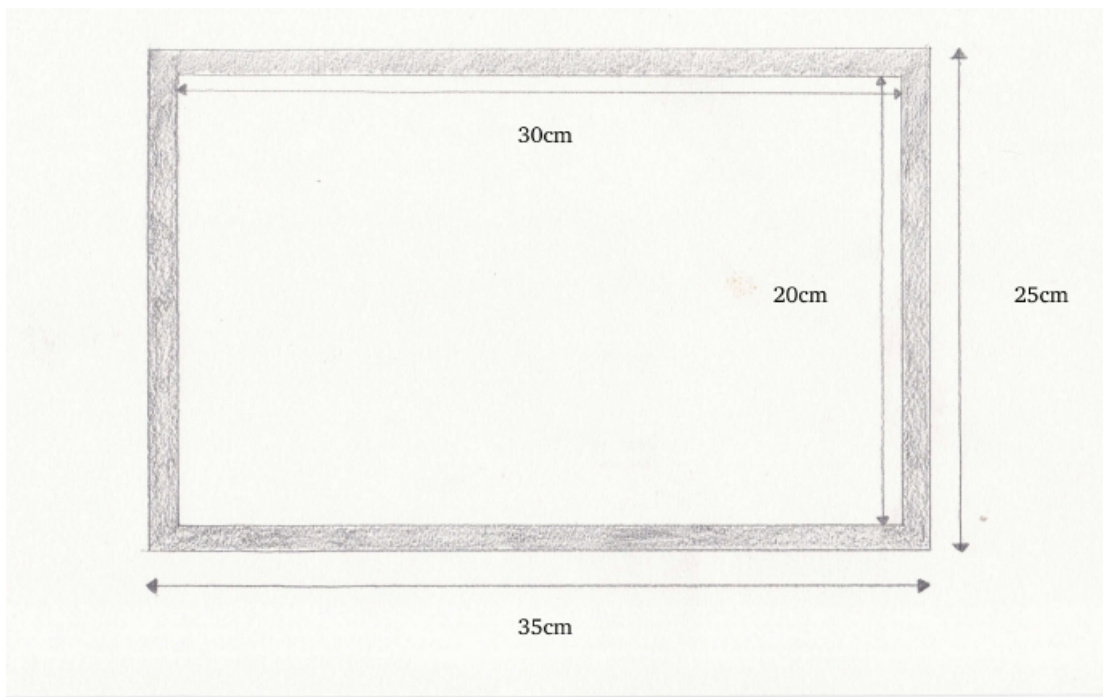
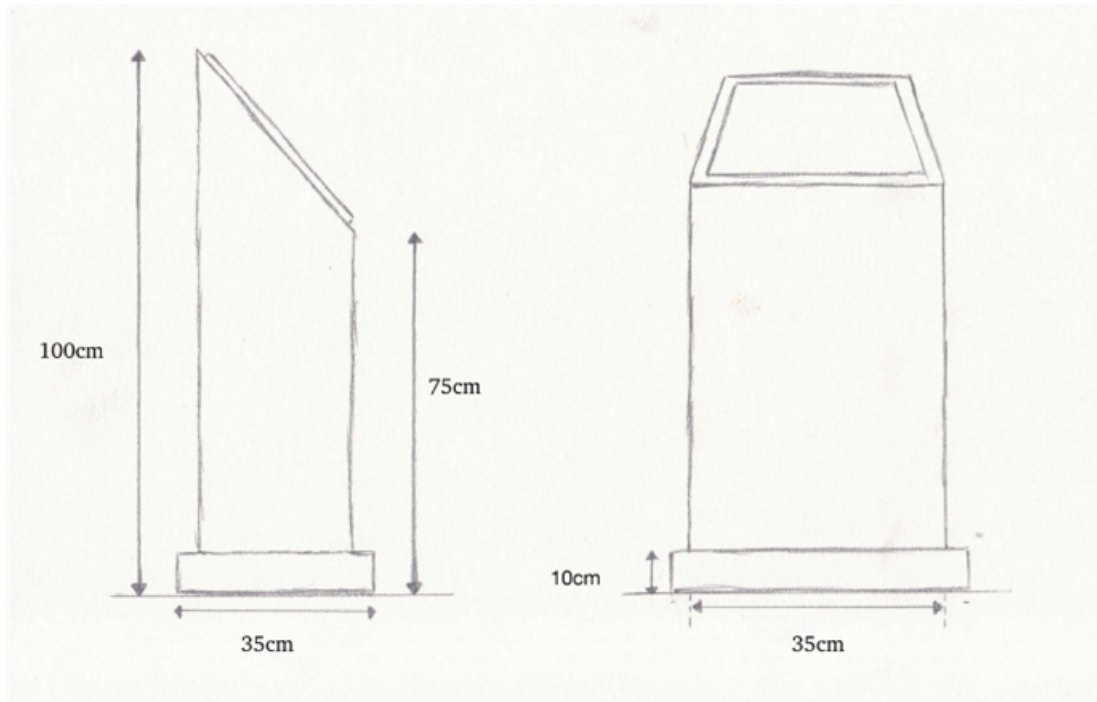
Font and type size would be appropriately selected in a traditional serif style to ensure cohesion with existing inscriptions on adjacent War Memorial

Plaque will state the following text featuring the UDR Gold Crest:

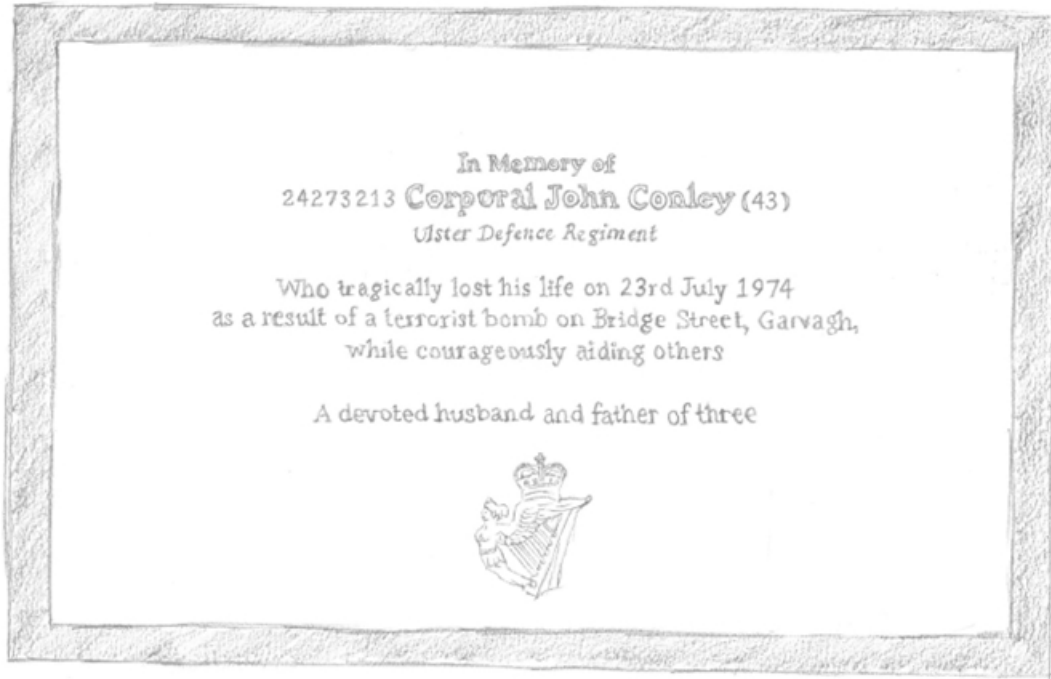
In Memory of
24273213 Corporal John Conley (43)
Ulster Defence Regiment

Who tragically lost his life on 23rd July 1974
As a result of a terrorist bomb on Bridge Street, Garvagh,
while courageously aiding others

A devoted husband and father of three



Proposed dimensions of granite face with
steel face inset



Proposed layout of steel plaque attached atop granite pillar



Proposed granite engraving design for pillar alongside examples of similar style



Design for UDR Memorial

Specification:

Plaque would state the following text:

In memory of all those who served and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice: 24 Platoon E Company (Garvagh Detachment), 5th County Londonderry Battalion, The Ulster Defence Regiment (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross) 1970-1992.

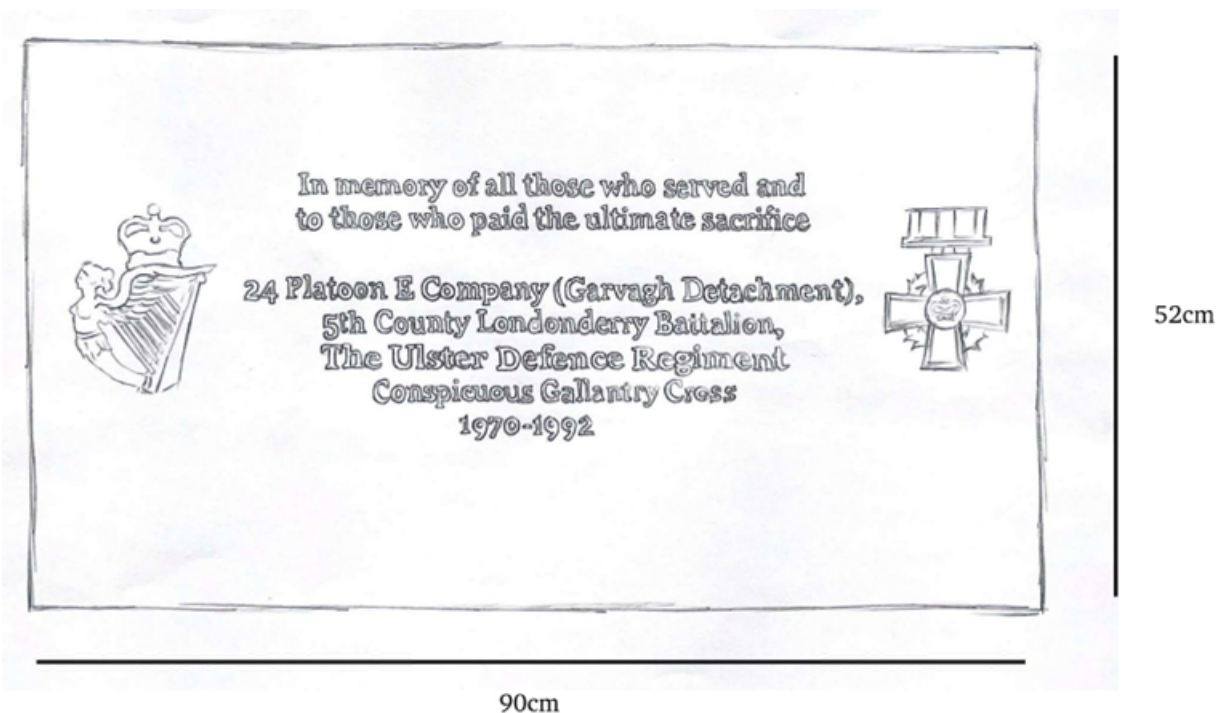
Details:

Font and type size would be appropriately selected in a traditional serif style to ensure cohesion with existing inscriptions

Text will be inscribed in dark grey South African granite or similar with an appropriate match found to retain similarity to existing infrastructure of basalt wall and War Memorial

Piece will feature the UDR Gold crest and the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross depicted in colour inscription

Appropriate fixings as piece will be affixed to existing wall on completion



Proposed plaque layout

Location of plaque

Proposed positioning of plaque affixed
to rear wall at War Memorial

Plaque should be situated a minimum
of 54 inches in height allowing ease of
viewing for all. Appropriate distance
made from bench seating below.



NOTES

Costing:

Approximate quotations indicate the completed costing for all completed works to be in the area of **£9500**

This should include but is not definitive of the following:

- granite plaque, pillar and base as per sketches,
- foundations and installation
- lettering, crests and floral engraving
- Steel engraved plaque face for pillar

Although contingency has been made, this is subject to some level of fluctuation due to the cost of the raw materials involved and the final stone selections made - these choices should be clearly stated in all received tenders before a selection is made

Installation and Accessibility:

As the pieces will be located in a public thoroughfare, considerations have been taken to ensure accessibility and viewing within this remit. The pillar piece dedicated to John Conley will be placed in the footpath, little groundworks should be necessary but care should be taken with existing infrastructure and remedial works carried out upon paving as necessary.

A minimum wheelchair accessibility of 1m should be sustained between the plinth installation and the base of the wall memorial. Regulations usually stipulate a minimum of 1m clearance for passageway on exterior pathways. This should be sustained as the absolute minimum between the plinth installation and the base of the existing war memorial. Due to the busy town centre context, this should be pushed to the maximum available within the area with the piece situated at the base of the wall. Passing places will still be available and alternative routes can be taken if required. The completed groundworks should ensure the area is returned to a firm, uniform and non slip surface for ease of navigation.

The plaque piece should be installed into either the existing wall structure of the War Memorial as proposed in Option 1 or to the rear wall at the War Memorial as proposed in Option 2. Measurements should be taken from the appointed manufacture on site to ensure accuracy and a smooth installation. Appropriate fixings will be supplied by manufacturer to ensure structural integrity and public safety. Fixings should have the least visual impact possible on the completed works. If option 2 is selected, remedial works may need to be carried out to the wall for aesthetic and structural purposes, this should be discussed collaboratively with Garvagh War Museum and Causeway Coast and Glens Council.

Maintenance:

Given the public facing context of the works, all materials have been selected for their durability and longevity. The selected materials are all present in the existing plaques and structures nearby, thus allowing an idea of how these works will age over time

Given the historical presence of the existing War Memorial and the traditionally selected materials for these pieces, it is hoped a respectful environment will be maintained in the surrounding area. The selected stone surfaces may be susceptible to some algae growth over time, cleaning may be necessary as years progress to maintain overall appearance but will not be detrimental to the integrity of the piece itself.