

James Small Memorial

For around 100 years, the James Small Monument has been the main focal point of the southern approach to Kirkmichael village. Erected in memory of James Small who was an important local figure during the 19th century, the monument is a fine piece of craftsmanship. Until very recently the monument has stood at the junction of the A924 and B950, but on the night of 29th / 30th December 2006 it either fell or was pulled down, shattering into many pieces as it landed on the road. At present, these pieces are sitting in the yard of the Blairgowrie Roads department, pending a decision on what should be done.

Community survey and pledge

Members of the local community, and those living further afield with an interest in the monument were canvassed during March 2007 on their opinions as to what should be done with and for the monument. Opinions were gathered by means of an open day which was held in Kirkmichael on March 21st, and by a questionnaire which was widely distributed around the local area.

People were asked what they would prefer to see being done with the monument (the options were repair, replace, redeploy pieces of the monuments as features around the village and grind into road dust). They were then asked, in the case of repair or replacement, where the monument should be sited. The options were replace in present location or site elsewhere.

People have also been asked whether they would be prepared to make a pledge towards the repair / replacement of the monument.

What should be done with the monument?

The returns from the community survey indicate a high level of support for the repair of the monument. The options were voted for as follows:

Repair – 80 votes

Replace – 5 votes

Use as a feature – 3 votes (one of these votes was only in the case where repair is, for some reason, not feasible).

Comment received:

- In a central garden feature.

Crushed into road dust – 1 vote.

This option was commented on by a few people as follows:

- Rubbish! What a cheek!!
- Hear! Hear!
- Ridiculous thought!

A couple of people commented on the proposals as follows:

- Favoured option – send bill to ones who pulled it over.
- When the monument is restored to its original site it must be protected by a A) rail or B) a solid low wall. Good idea!
- The pieces should be set in resin or similar, showing the breaks to create a new work of art!!

Where should a repaired / replacement monument be sited?

The returns from the community survey indicate a high level of support for the restoration of the monument to its present location. The options were voted for as follows:

Restore to present location – 70 votes

Locate somewhere else – 9 votes

Comments concerning the location of the monument were as follows:

- The monument should be prominently sited but not so that it risks being struck by a passing vehicle.
- Is there a park or some other significant location that would not cause a traffic hazard?
- Off the roadway, possibly in a more public place to limit accidents, vandals etc.
- At the same junction, but in the field at the side.
- The monument could benefit from being moved perhaps to the new car park where it is easier to enjoy and appreciate its aesthetic qualities.

Pledges

At the time of writing, pledges have been made by 29 people, with a small number indicating that they might be willing to make a pledge at a later date. A total of £1,525 has been pledged by members of the public to date. Some of this amount is contingent on an appropriate location being identified for the repaired monument.

Appraisal

Repair of the monument is the overwhelmingly most popular option. There is also very strong support for the reinstatement of the monument in its current location. While initial indications from the Council are that reinstatement in exactly the same location as previously would be satisfactory, a number of factors will need to be taken into account before any final decision is reached, including:

- The need which has been identified to protect the monument from any future vandal activity. What form would this protection reasonably take, and would this impact on the safety and suitability of the present road layout around the monument;
- For many years there have been concerns about the general safety of road traffic flow around the monument. Drivers who are unfamiliar with the junction can drive the “wrong way” round the monument, due to the uncommon arrangement which is currently in force at the junction. The damage to the monument presents an opportunity to reconsider the siting of the monument, and to “standardise” the form of this junction; and
- Whether there might be scope to retain the monument as a gateway feature to the village in broadly the same location, but adjacent to, or just inside the adjacent field between the B950 and the A924.

Initial cost estimates for the repair of the monument are in the region of £18,000. There have been indications from Perth and Kinross Council that they would be prepared to make a significant contribution towards this amount. There have also been indications that Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust may be willing to make a contribution. Including the contributions from the community, it is still likely that there will be a reasonable funding gap, and alternative sources will have to be considered. Options, including in-kind works from the community should also be taken into account.

Next steps

The following are suggested as next steps towards reaching a positive outcome regarding the replacement of the monument:

- [1] Perth and Kinross Council and Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust confirm the amount they are prepared to commit towards the replacement;
- [2] In-kind community contributions scoped and agreed.

[3] Funding gap assessed, and plan devised towards addressing this.

[4] Final decision made on the location of the monument.

[5] Gap funding secured.