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Mon March 26 2007

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News





INLA statue

INLA statue breaches Council's equality commitments - Hay

DUP Alderman William Hay has accused Derry City Council of appearing to defend a controversial statue of an INLA man in the City Cemetery.

By Michael McMonagle

Alderman Hay has said that the monument - which depicts an armed and masked INLA volunteer - is breach of the council's Equality commitments.

The DUP man raised his objection to the monument after a councillor in Omagh objected to a monument commemorating republican hunger strikers in Dromore cemetery.

"If you look at the Omagh ruling, the Equality Commission made it clear that it clear that the council there broke their own rules and I believe that we have the same situation in Derry except ours is worse.

"This monument features a masked man with a rifle and it towers over graves in the city centre. I believe that the community should not have to see this statue when they come to remember their loved ones. No organisation should be allowed to use a cemetery for political reasons. It should be a neutral place," he said.

Alderman Hay said that he has not been satisfied with Derry City's Council's reaction to the row.

"Council need to get this equality proofed and then look at the findings and see how to deal with the issue. This monument was erected for people who carried out a terror campaign and it glorifies that campaign. It almost seems like the council are defending it. No public representative should defend this.

"The people who put up this statue do not seem to care that people from all sections of the community visit the cemetery to pay respects to their dead," he said.

The DUP alderman also said that he believed that the public's reaction to the debate would be different if the statue was commemorating loyalists.

"What would happen if a loyalist organisation did the same thing in a cemetery in the Waterside. There would be uproar," he said.

A spokesperson for Derry City Council explained that while no equality assessment or screening process was carried out at the time the statue was erected, a full and detailed report was presented to Council on the issue and was debated by the Council. No action was called for by the Council.

"It is our understanding that the offending monument in Dromore was not erected to commemorate anyone buried at the cemetery but in memory of persons who died and are buried elsewhere. The position, therefore, seems to be quite different and distinct from that pertaining to the controversial memorial in the City Cemetery," the spokesperson said.

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