



SPEAKING UP FOR THE COMMUNITY

Wednesday, August 22, 2007

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Magic Boat resembles Irish statue

WIRRAL Council has defended plans to build a controversial sculpture after it turned out to resemble a sculpture in Ireland.

The Magic Boat, a massive iconic piece of art planned for the roundabout at the junction of the A41 and the M53, is very like 'To The Skellig'.

The bronze statue, which is 10 feet long and about 12 feet high, was created in 1995 in the parish of Caherciveen in County Kerry.

It represents four monks sailing to a monastery off the Irish coast, one of whom is said to be St Brendan, patron saint of Kerry.

The Magic Boat's designers have described the similarity as an "extraordinary coincidence".

The 60-metre, £300,000 Wirral sculpture was given the go-ahead by councillors last week and is expected to be in place early in 2008.

A spokesman for Wirral Council said: "We are aware of similarities between the proposed Magic Boat structure and the Monks in the Boat in Ireland.

"However, the designers reassure us that any similarities are completely coincidental.

"We would also point out that the iconography of the two structures is completely different, the Irish structure conveying a religious connotation whereas the structure in Wirral conveys the maritime and Viking heritage of the borough."

Mark Renn, from designers Renn and Thacker, who were commissioned to design the Wirral sculpture, said: "It is an extraordinary coincidence. We're certainly never seen this sculpture before.

"I have since contacted the artist in Ireland who has wished us well with our design."

HISTORIC FIND TO BE REBUILT



● Neston town manager Dr Peter Rossiter, the Rev Neil Robb, Professor Stephen Harding, Dr Martin Cooper and archaeologist Professor Roger White with the fragments

Stones depict Viking heritage

By MATT HURST

PLANS are afoot to reconstruct a historic Neston cross depicting life when the town was colonised by Vikings more than a thousand years ago.

A group of experts, ranging in expertise from archaeology to history to conservation techniques, met at the Church of St Mary and Helen to discuss the best way forward for a project first mooted by late local historian Geoffrey Place more than 20 years ago.

At present the three crosses, constructed entirely from the sandstone commonplace in the area, can only be seen in fragments.

But the team, made up of Neston town centre manager Dr Peter Rossiter, the Rev Neil Robb, Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding, archaeologist Professor Roger White and Dr Martin Cooper from Liverpool's Conservation Centre, has concluded that two of the fragments held together and plans have been drawn up to construct a replica to reveal the cross' former glory.

They believe the completed piece will show a Viking couple, detailed enough to see the pigtail of the woman, holding hands while an angel guards from above, alongside hunting and fighting scenes

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Shedding light on Vikings

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and what could be the earliest ever depiction of a jousting contest.

Professor White, who began researching the stones' historical relevance in the 1980s, said: "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of these carvings.

"The images on them demonstrate contacts throughout the 10th century Viking world, to Ireland, the Isle of Man and Scotland.

"The depiction of a joust is an extraordinary image associated with the middle ages, yet here it is 400 years earlier.

"In contrast, the other side has a tender and touching depiction of a couple celebrating their life together and making the transition from pagan to Christian belief.

"This was a time of profound change in Viking life captured by this group of stones forever."

A laser scan of the two fragments will reproduce their current condition as a 3D computer model.

Dr Cooper will then recreate the missing sections to produce a computer-generated image of how the cross looked a thousand years ago, with the aim of displaying it alongside the fragments.