To commemorate the fallen servicemen and women of the two World Wars.

To preserve and maintain the cemeteries and memorials for the public in perpetuity.

To maintain and provide access to records and archives.

To develop understanding of, and support for, our mission.

To operate efficiently, offering excellent value for money.

To develop and support a skilled team who are proud to work with us, living our values.
This strategic plan is the route map for the Commission to move into its second century of operations. It covers the crucial period in which we mark the centenary of the First World War, and thus also our own centenary. It flows from the Commission’s Centenary Strategy Vision, which set the long term trajectory for the organisation. It sets out what we want to achieve; and the key objectives we will pursue. Detailed annual business plans will set out exactly what we will do and when, and how they will be met over the next five years with key workstreams. We remain, and are likely to for the foreseeable future, dependent on public finance. Value for money and efficiency and effectiveness will be at the heart of everything we do; our movement into a new area of activity must underpin our core purpose, not undermine it.

By the end of this period, CWGC needs to clearly articulate its relevance, increase the understanding of the organisation, and be working from a position of knowledge of its liabilities, and how to tackle them. It is a key five years in which to prove ourselves further, and to make the organisation truly fit for the next century.

A vision for 2020

We want to be recognised as an international treasure, as relevant today as we have ever been.

The public will be supporting us, through financial donations for non-core work; volunteering, enabling a step change in our UK delivery, and in our interpretation of sites; and on social media platforms. More people will be visiting more of our sites around the world.

We will have a very clear understanding of the condition of our built estate, and plans for how to deliver the care the memorials and structures require. Our team will have confidence in the organisation’s future direction, and realistic career and reward expectations. They will have a flexible outlook, and the skills they need to thrive.
Key objectives

1. To improve the efficiency of the care we take of the cemeteries, graves and memorials for which we are responsible, in a way that offers long-term sustainability and dignity.

2. To support our member states with the best possible approach to recovery and identification of newly discovered remains.

3. To generate greater public understanding of the Commission’s work worldwide, and harness support.

4. To be acknowledged as a valued partner in national and international commemorative events, providing the most appropriate and desired locations for key partners.

5. To develop and improve the visitor experience, and stimulate more visits.

6. To enhance our maintenance and the accessibility of our historic archives and records.

7. To create a workable and viable 21st century governance, business and staffing model for the global operation, with clarity on status; systems and support which are fit for purpose; and offering excellent value for money.

Objective 8 - Our team

We can deliver none of this without our dedicated, skilled teams around the world. Our internal objective is to offer stimulating jobs with development to meet the modern needs of the Commission and the wider sector, enabling our people to thrive, with appropriate rewards, delivering the best value for our funding Governments.
What we will deliver - Objective 1

To improve the efficiency of the care we take of the cemeteries, graves and memorials, in a way that offers long-term sustainability and dignity.

We want any visitor to one of our cemeteries, memorials or plots to feel satisfied that the war dead are well cared for in the local context. We know that we are able to deliver an excellent result in our war cemeteries around the world. But if we are raising the public awareness that there are war graves in their communities, we have to be confident that the appearance of those scattered graves and private memorials at least show we care.

Horticulture

We have long serving and loyal staff, who have developed their expertise over decades, across our geographies. As such, we have to ensure we are using our resources well and sharing that knowledge. The horticultural efficiency programme has yielded results, but new challenges, like the potential prohibition of chemicals coupled with greater extremes of climate will inevitably lead us to review what we do, or can do affordably, and where. The irrigation infrastructure review will highlight the cost of restoring all our systems to full operability, but even as we consider the relative priorities, and the alternatives, we have to be confident that the ongoing cost of water is proportionate and affordable.
Works and Maintenance; Taking the Conservation Approach – A shift in emphasis.

Our focus has historically been to treat every building, structure or headstone as something we made (and hence could remake if necessary), with our focus on its superficial appearance, and its use and function, rather than on the heritage and history the structure and its original materials represent. We want to establish a longer term, needs-based approach to our management of our structures, ensuring they last.

Heritage-standard condition surveys and conservation plans will enable us to prioritise bids between areas, assessing the impact of the works, or of a decision not to fund them, regardless of any cycle. Each plan will specify materials or methods of carrying out work, and this has to be communicated to those carrying it out.

Headstone Production

We need to generate headstones which have a longer lifespan, and improve the life of those we already have. Our target is 100 years, which we know to be achievable. We will be redefining and standardising the replacement criteria, only replacing once re- engraving or other remedial treatments have been discounted. As a result, in 2016-17 we will reduce the production supply to 12,000.
Objectives 2 and 3

To support our member states with the best possible approach to recovery and identification of newly discovered remains.

Our work in providing commemoration for war dead continues, as remains are still regularly recovered. With the help of our member states, we ensure each man recovered has a fitting funeral and committal, and any finds are swiftly recovered, cared for appropriately and every support given to member governments in achieving identification.

We will review with key stakeholders our methodology and facilities for recovering remains in France, where we are the official recovery body.

We will consider all cases which have been alternatively commemorated yet where graves still exist, with a view to confirming our policy approach for the future.

To generate greater understanding of the Commission’s work, and harness support.

Our research shows that those who know us, respect and love what we do (though they are not always completely certain what that is.) But amongst the wider public in the UK, there is very little understanding of what we are or what we do, and that may well also be the case in Member countries and the wider Commonwealth which we also represent.

Our external engagement activity therefore has the following targets:
The key messages - what we want people to know about the CWGC

1. We do a great job around the world in a perpetual mission to commemorate the sacrifice of 1.7 million war dead.

2. Our Governments fund this - regardless of visitor numbers - because it is the right thing to do.

3. The architecture, design and horticulture we manage is amazing. The story of our founding principles is fascinating. Our archives offer a wealth of information.

4. Our staff are passionate, engaged and care deeply. We are a truly diverse organisation, employing dozens of nationalities, and caring for people from every nation, creed and race on an equal basis.

5. We want people to visit our sites, and help us commemorate – come to us first when planning a trip.

6. Wherever you are, you are near a war grave. Or we can help show you the “foreign fields”.

A membership scheme

We know there are people who are passionate about what we do, who want to help us, or be associated with us. A supporters group or Friends scheme is an obvious step for us, not just as a fundraising vehicle, but as a way of communicating with a key group of potential advocates and ambassadors, who may well be able to help us achieve our wider objectives.

Volunteering

Attitudes to volunteering need to shift. There is a tide of goodwill, which we are already having to hold back. There are almost daily examples of well-meaning people supplementing our work in the UK, yet we are in effect letting them do so without any guidance or support. We cannot reach every location in the UK on a frequent basis, and we can never hope to achieve continuous care with the resources we have. We need therefore to start to harness the skills, goodwill and interest that exists in communities; set out the guidelines; and carry out training for volunteers, mitigating any potential damage, giving safety advice and collecting information about the condition of places which are less accessible. This work will augment, not replace our teams.

Volunteers can also marshal and support community events in the cemeteries, and help guide the community engagement projects we plan for the future.
Objective 4

To be acknowledged as a valued partner in national and international commemorative events.

CWGC representatives are now instrumental in the design and delivery of all UK commemorations; on bilateral committees with all host nations; and key consultees with Member Governments as they plan their centenary interventions and events. We will keep up this impetus, and ensure visits to our sites, and continued interest in the CWGC are considered as legacy goals of the national commemorations.

We are very conscious that this period will place major demands and pressure on our representational resources, and our planning teams in Arras and Ieper. We will need to consider carefully the balance and level of staff resource, and where it is located.

The Commission’s Centenary

The Imperial War Graves Commission was founded in May 1917. The 100th anniversary of the Commission provides us with a great opportunity to remind people and the media about what we do and who we are, and to take a different approach to commemoration.

We have rightly been supportive of the national and international commemorations of key anniversaries of battles and campaigns, but our own centenary is rather different. It provides an opportunity to explore a legacy of extraordinary architecture and design, and to make the highly enlightened ideals of the founding fathers relevant again, in a world which is desperately trying to find new ways to develop community cohesion and to explore our common human experience. By the end of our centenary year we want to ensure that we are known; our staff and Commissioners have been recognised; that our achievements are celebrated; and we have a legacy programme, embedded in communities, moving us forward to our next century.
Objective 5

To develop and improve the visitor experience, and stimulate more visits.

Given that our top strategic priority is to commemorate, encouraging others to take part is something of a given. And it is also right to say we should not care too much about the numbers alone. What is important is that those who come gain a real understanding of what they are seeing – we want people to come as tourists and leave as pilgrims.

We want visitors to

- Be moved. We need to ensure the place feels dignified and appropriate as a cemetery or memorial, and that the loss is appreciated.
- Understand the context in which the people died – a bit about why they were there.
- Learn a little more about the people while onsite, but be signposted to more information to explore at home.
- Understand that it is the CWGC who created and maintain the cemetery or memorial, and be impressed by the standards with which we do so.
- Leave wanting to know more.
- Participate, and help, by sharing stories or making a donation; or keeping in touch (by giving us their addresses) and registering on our website.

We do this by

- Providing better on site interpretation, including visitor information panels, but also by using innovative multimedia solutions delivered via smartphone app. This may require some cemeteries to be Wi-Fi enabled.
- Offering more visit focussed publications and downloadable materials, including themed tours and trails, which provide practical support for those planning visits.
• Encouraging volunteer guides and explainers.
• Working with the Travel Trade and the Guild of Battlefield Guides.
• Creating means for the public to “crowdsource”, and upload or pass to us information about the people we honour.
• Ensuring that every visitor leaves knowing what the CWGC is and does, and how to support us, offering online and physical ways to donate (including collection boxes).
• Improving the facility for visitors by working with local authorities and stakeholders encouraging interpretation centres. We are currently exploring the relative merits of different options for a visitor centre of our own in France or Belgium.

Objective 6

To enhance our maintenance of, and the accessibility of, our historic archives and records.

Our relationship to our archives and records has fundamentally changed since all the casualty database, and now almost all its supporting documents, have been shared online with the general public.

The next five years will see our focus move increasingly towards the exploration and promulgation of our own historic archives about the foundation of the Commission, and its work over a century. We will deliver an exhibition in 2017, and our historic archive will go online. There may be an opportunity for e-commerce, offering commercial exploitation of many of the images we own.
Objective 7

To develop a workable and viable 21st century governance, business and staffing model for the global operation, with clarity on status, and systems and support which are fit for purpose, and offer excellent value for money.

An international organisation

The Commission itself should remain solely a Royal Charter body, reflecting its international membership. We are keen to move into new areas of public engagement for which a charitable vehicle would be highly desirable. This would enable us to keep the core business separate, and funded entirely by Governments, and yet to explore new self-funding, or grant funded areas of activity, which may or may not succeed, without risking our existing operation. We are also considering creating an Advisory Committee (originally conceived in our Charter) which could help broaden the skills base of the Commission or the Charity, and offer support in public (celebrity endorsement) or fundraising help, along with specific expertise to help guide the management team.
A Global Team

Our people strategy will be

- To encourage more multiskilling at operational levels, creating a more flexible workforce, whilst nurturing and developing specialist skills we are unable to purchase in the market at an affordable rate.
- To explore greater flexibility in terms of our employment practices, with high-performing staff, well trained, forming a core, and replacing those we lose through natural wastage (where practical) with seasonal staff they can lead in key growing periods.
- To spot talent and develop leadership potential, supported by language or specialist skills training, offering faster career progression to those with a genuine long-term commitment to mobility, wherever they join the Commission.
- At management levels we will encourage greater movement between disciplines, but recognise that there will be times when we need specialists to support key areas of activity.
- To continue to live by our values. For the leadership team at least, we need to add transparency, openness and loyalty to that list, ensuring we are mutually supportive as we drive the organisation forwards.

Health and Safety

We will aim to perform our work in such a way as to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our employees, visitors and others who may come into contact with us. We will aim to achieve this through the application of global standards, appropriate management systems as well as dynamic risk assessments together with skilled trained staff.

IT and IS

In the past we – in common with many other organisations – have struggled to make genuine efficiency gains and savings from IT projects. But we are learning. We now know that we are better off taking “off the peg” solutions and then making them work in our context than starting from scratch. And we also now know that when specifying new systems, we need to start with what areas need – the largest users – and then consider head office requirements.
Our priorities for the next five years are

- A new website – capable of e-commerce, hosting a supporter area, and offering greater public interaction.
- Mobile management systems – providing our staff with mobile devices on which they can assess and report the condition of cemeteries from files and plans, and on which they can order headstones, procure supplies and operate in the field without the need to return to offices to input or access data.
- A truly useable HR system, capable of interoperating with payroll systems in our major locations, and giving us the information we need to be able to run a really global operation.

HR, training and development and finance will be brought together, and areas will have more resource of their own. As staff costs increase, we may also be looking to the market to deliver some services.
Our staffing aims

By 2020 we want to ensure we have the right people with the right skills in the right place.

- We want to be the employer of choice for those wishing to work in the field of commemoration.
- We need to have found the right balance between in house and externally procured skills.
- We need a greater supply of truly mobile staff, for short duration postings, with the ability to be absorbed back into a team.
- We need to balance short term staff satisfaction with reward packages with long term affordability. This may mean tackling and updating long standing custom and practices.
- We want to see greater internal competition for key roles, but also a willingness to look outside, and beyond CWGC to enrich careers.
- We want a much better return on investment on our training and development spend.
- We need to explore different staffing models which offer flexibility and better value.
THEIR NAME LIVETH
FOR EVERMORE