

Demolition delayed as study undertaken

By KEN MACLEOD
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The Old Sydney Society has delayed demolition on a neglected World War II gun emplacement sites while a study is undertaken to determine its historical value.

"We're still waiting for the report," says Brian Tennyson, a spokesman for the Old Sydney Society. "Dan White is doing it, and it should be ready some time this week."

With the help of the study, funded by Devco and the Department of Tourism, White has been doing an assessment of three such sites on the island: Fort Petrie in South Bar, Chapel Head in Sydney Mines and Fort Oxford in Alder Point.

The assessment is expected to clear up a number of things — who owns each site, how much land comes with each and how realistic the possibility of buying a particular site would be. As well, the Old Sydney Society will be bringing in an engineering consultant to see how much the entire project would cost.

"At the moment, there's one site that looks more promising than the others," says Tennyson, "but no announcement has been made yet."

There has been some grumbling from South Bar residents and Cape Breton County officials concerning the Fort Petrie site. They see the gun emplacements as an eyesore and a hazard for children rather than a potential tourist attraction.

Tennyson understands their line of reasoning but feels the Old Sydney Society has a good case when it proposes the area be turned into an historical site.

"I don't think there's any question the sites can be made interesting for local people as well as tourists," he says. "We played an important part in two

world wars. We produced one-third of the steel for wartime Canada — German subs could have done considerable damage.

"Sydney Harbor was on the front lines."

But the bottom line, as always, is money. Among the County's concerns were the fact that residents wanted the gun emplacements demolished and fears that the historical monument option wouldn't be viable.

"I think the warden was not unsympathetic to the idea," says Tennyson, "but I think he was under pressure in terms of Fort Petrie. It's been a concern of local residents for years as an eyesore and a hazard for kids playing there."

"There's been a lot of pressure from the population and councillors to do something; it's a legitimate concern — they were all set to have Fort Petrie levelled."

Though he admits citizens in the area were upset with the delay in their demolition plans, Tennyson promises the issue will be resolved soon.

"We have to get together and assess the report ourselves," he says. "If the report says it looks feasible, I'd presume we'd then proceed to write up some sort of proposal."

Annual concert

The Gaelic Society of Cape Breton will present back-to-back entertainments in October, starting with its 19th annual concert Oct. 25 at the UCCB Playhouse. The "concert with a difference" will feature the island's top fiddlers, pianists, pipers and dancers as well as group and solo Gaelic singing. On Friday, Oct. 28 at Taigh nan Gaidheal the Society will present its traditional Hallowe'en party, Oidhche Samhna, with fuarag, a milling frolic and other Gaelic entertainment.