

Police apologise to Chinese family

INQUIRY FINDS 'FAILINGS' IN PROBE

A POLICE force yesterday apologised to the family of a Chinese man who died following a gang attack after an inquiry found "significant failings" in its probe into his killing.

Delivery driver Simon San, 40, died in August last year after being assaulted by youths near the take-away where he worked in Edinburgh's Lochend Road.

One of the teenagers, 16-year-old John Reid, admitted culpable homicide and was locked up for five years by a judge who said he and the others had acted like "pack animals".

Mr San's family always maintained his death was racially motivated but police did not record the attack as a racist incident.

Lothian and Borders Police yesterday acknowledged they should have done so and said they were sorry that the victim's family had "not received the service to which they are entitled" from the force.

The apology came after an internal inquiry carried out into the way police handled the case found a number of failures.

The victim's family welcomed the report but said they remain "very angry" about the way they were treated and have "totally lost" their faith and trust in the police.

Lothian and Borders

“Simon was not in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was at his place of work”

Police issued their apology at a press conference in Edinburgh yesterday attended by members of Mr San's family.

Deputy Chief Constable Steve Allen said: "There is no doubt that Simon's family have not had the service from my force that we would hope to give any family or any victim of crime."

"I have apologised privately to the family for that failure and would like to repeat that apology publicly."

Addressing the family directly, he said: "I am sorry that we did not listen to you when you told us you thought the attack on Simon was racially motivated."

"I am sorry that we did not treat you in a way that made you feel like you mattered to us."

"I am sorry that we did not record and investigate the attack on Simon as a racist incident when we should have done so."

"Simon was not in the wrong place at the wrong time. Simon was at his place of work."

"He was playing his part as an active member of our community, contributing through work to the economic success of this city."

"Simon was a fellow citizen who was killed tragically and pointlessly."

Murder victim's family win grave battle against her killer husband

HEADSTONE REMOVED FROM CEMETERY DESPITE WEBSTER'S REFUSAL TO RELINQUISH CONTROL

BY SHONA GOSSIP

The family of murder victim Claire Morris have won their battle to reclaim her grave from killer husband Malcolm Webster.



FATEFUL: Claire Morris with adopted mother Betty on the day of her wedding to Webster

Aberdeenshire Council has removed her headstone from Tarves Cemetery - after vowing last month to do everything it could to help Peter Morris get around the strict property laws preventing him from erasing Webster's name from her memorial.

Last night, Mr Morris said it was "fantastic" news the gravestone had been taken down, and said the inscription on it had simply been another attempt by Webster to cover up his crime.

The 52-year-old was jailed for 30 years in July after being convicted of murdering Ms Morris in a deliberate car crash and fire 17 years ago as part of a scheme to fraudulently claim her life insurance.

After the verdict, Mr Morris launched a campaign to have his sister's headstone - which refers to her by her married name and as a "dear wife" - altered. But the local authority said he would be unable to change it unless he got permission from Webster, who owns the lair.

The former nurse, who has launched an appeal against his conviction, refused to relinquish control of the grave, fearing it could be seen as an admission of guilt.

Ryan Whelan, founder of the student-run Aberdeen Law Project, then stepped in to help Mr Morris and met the council's legal team to discuss ways of getting around the law.

It is understood that during

the meeting the two sides discussed the issue of desecration, and it was suggested the existing headstone should be removed not only for the Morris family, but out of consideration and respect for others visiting the cemetery.

Last night, Mr Whelan said he was unable to divulge what had been discussed and described it as an "extremely complex legal matter".

Karen Wiles, head of the legal and governance department at the council, said all the implications of removing the headstone had been fully considered before any action was taken.

She said: "We appreciate the strong feelings of Ms Morris's family and the wider public mood about this issue. Having considered very carefully all the legal implications, we believe that, given Mr Webster's criminal conviction, it is appropriate for us

to remove the headstone and place it in secure storage.

"We have written to Mr Webster's lawyer asking him to relinquish his position as lair holder and have received a response declining this request. We will be writing once again to advise them of the action we have now taken."

Webster's solicitor, John McLeod, said he would be consulting his client to see if he wanted to contest the removal of the headstone, and questioned Aberdeenshire Council's move.

He said: "I'm not overly impressed at their tactics, announcing through the media that they will be sending me a letter telling me what they have done. It's questionable professionally. "I'll speak to Mr Webster about it in due course and see what, if anything, he wants to do about it."

Mr Whelan, 23, a masters research student at Aberdeen University, said the law project would continue working with the council to deal with any issues that may now arise. He said: "Given that

Webster was convicted of murdering Claire Morris, the gravestone that was in situ was a desecration of Claire's grave in the mind of all sensible people. It is right and proper that it has now been removed by Aberdeenshire Council."

Mr Morris, 48, from Kent said it was "extremely satisfying" that progress had been made for his sister.

"The removal of the headstone is massive," he said. "It removes a stain, a lie from our family. It was a lie, it was a falsity on Claire's death. It was something that covered up Webster's crimes for 17 years."

He added: "I really want to highlight the work that Ryan has done, it's absolutely magnificent for a student to be able to do what he has done - he's not even a professional yet so it's quite an achievement."

The council and Mr Whelan are now exploring the possibility of erecting a wall-mounted memorial above Ms Morris's grave.

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The gap in the grounds of Tarves Cemetery where the removed headstone once stood - it is now in secure storage



Malcolm Webster: refused to give up role as lair holder

Award-winning student behind council's dramatic decision

PETER MORRIS AMONG DOZENS OF PEOPLE HELPED BY FREE LAW CLINIC SET UP BY ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE



Ryan Whelan: last-minute career change

THE campaign to persuade Aberdeenshire Council to take yesterday's dramatic step was headed by an award-winning 23-year-old law student.

Ryan Whelan set up the Aberdeen Law Project last year after realising there were few opportunities for his fellow students to gain first-hand experience in the field.

Since then, the free law clinic at Aberdeen University has helped dozens of people, including Peter Morris, who admits he would have been unable to afford the costs of fighting to reclaim his sister's grave from Malcolm Webster.

Mr Whelan and Professor Roderick Paisley, who first suggested the clinic take on

the case, wrote a legal document outlining the ways the council could get around the strict property laws, which he then discussed with them in detail last month.

The former head boy of St Machar Academy in Aberdeen originally planned to do politics at university, before changing his mind at the last minute.

He said: "I was going to do politics and then decided it was law I was interested in. Law underpins everything. What moved me to study politics was a desire to effect change, and I realised that could be done through law too so decided to pursue it." During his time at Aberdeen University, Mr Whelan was president of the

law society and finished top of his year.

He also scooped several prizes, including the university's Cruickshank Prize which is awarded to the top honours student, and the Quinquennial Prize for his work in establishing the Aberdeen Law Project and teaching youngsters about the legal profession.

Earlier this year the masters research student travelled to the US to see how universities in New York, Washington and Baltimore operated their similar law clinics.

His accomplishments have also been recognised outwith the university, and earlier this year he received the Attorney General Law Works Award.

£1.4million to help TV and digital media flourish

THE development of TV and digital media has been given a £1.4million boost by the Scottish Government.

The money will be used over three years for various training schemes, including trips to the US and Canada to meet top broadcasters and digital companies.

People from Scottish concerns will be able to visit leading companies in Silicon Valley, California, such as Pixar and Facebook.

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: "Television and digital media support 42,000 jobs in Scotland and make a valuable contribution to the success of our world-leading

creative industries. The government is committed to supporting Scotland's creative economy."

The Creative Edge partnership involves Channel 4, arts agency Creative Scotland, jobs agency Scottish Enterprise and independent charity TRC Media.

Labour welcomed the funding and urged ministers to develop apprenticeships. Culture spokeswoman Patricia Ferguson said: "I urge the Scottish Government to work with all key stakeholders to develop and extend apprenticeships in our creative industries that are so notoriously difficult to get into."

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