



DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

PROTOCOL FOR PROVISION OF CEMETERY AND CREMATION SERVICES

Authors Alison.M.McIlroy

Owner Head of Roads and Amenity Services

Date FEBRUARY 2016

Version 1.8

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this document is to enable delivery of a well organised, sympathetic and dignified burial and cremation service meeting the needs of the bereaved by making provision for the needs of all faiths, religious and secular lifestyles and provide a safe environment for burial and cremation.

Argyll and Bute Council offers bereavement services, which operate in accordance with the relevant statutory legislation. The provision of the burial and cremation services by Argyll and Bute Council involves a wide range of staff. Administration, operational and strategic expertise to a high level is needed to ensure delivery of this most challenging of service areas.

Dignity, compassion, accuracy, attention to detail and understanding are skills required. These skills, backed by a clear and concise service delivery agreement, will ensure services are consistently delivered at a standard the council can be proud of. The services are of particular importance to people in Argyll and Bute, representing community and heritage on a very local level. With 131 burial sites under Argyll and Bute Council's control, the diversity of locations means that delivering continuity can be challenging.

Protocols agreed as a standard across all geographical areas ensure that this same high standard is delivered consistently throughout the entire Argyll and Bute Council area. Argyll and Bute Council seeks to secure resources in order to provide the best possible service to residents of the area. This protocol recognises the finite nature of finance and land resources and the need to promote the sustainable approach to the disposal of remains.

In addition to financial pressure, environmental regulation is increasingly restricting development for burial grounds expansion and in Argyll and Bute the physical geography and topography further restrict available suitable ground for expansion.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this document is to provide a protocol to provide clarity on service provision.

The objectives are:

- To give detail on the main service provision areas in relation to cemeteries and cremation
- To provide a framework for the service procedures guide.
- To provide information and guidance to the customers of the service.
- To ensure consistency across all areas of the Council.

3 INTRODUCTION

Although earth burial has been practiced for many hundreds of years, the development of cemetery layout as known today in the UK took place after the Burial Act (Scotland) 1855. The maintenance and operation became the responsible of the local authority where many churchyards and other burial grounds were transferred to them by virtue of The Church of Scotland (Property and Endowment) Act 1925. In Argyll and Bute many small villages retain a burial ground and local expectation to be buried in the local burial ground places a significant financial burden upon the Council to provide and maintain new burial space without restriction.

Argyll and Bute Council has 131 burial grounds on its asset register, 68 sites provide new burial spaces with the remainder being closed i.e. having no new space for burial but may have capacity for reopening of existing burial lairs where lair certification ownership and grave depth may permit. Closed burial sites are generally sites with older type memorials and site specific assessments are required to determine level of maintenance in each site.

Argyll and Bute Council operates one crematorium, located at Cardross. All operations within the crematorium are governed by statutory regulations and the Council's Cardross Crematorium Service Procedure.

Key challenges for the service are managing the provision of burial space to meet current and future demand, memorial safety, meeting the office support needs of the service in a consistent way over all geographical areas and ensuring technical support is available for staff through production of a service manual.

4 ASSET MANAGEMENT

Argyll and Bute Council currently owns and manages 131 cemeteries within the asset register. Sixty eight of these sites have unused lairs available, the remainder have no unused lair space. Grass will be cut through the growing season as per the Grounds Maintenance schedules, excluding woodland burial sites. Paths and roadways will be weed free. Walls, fences and other buildings and fixed structures will be inspected on an annual basis by competent staff. Repair and development needs will be identified and delivered through revenue and capital funding streams. Memorial management will be carried out through the Protocol for Memorial Safety.

Major works including any future cemetery extensions, major surfacing works and drainage improvement will be funded through capital expenditure, identified within the Roads and Amenity Services asset suitability document.

Cardross Crematorium will be maintained by the Council's Facilities Services on behalf of Amenity Services, the associated Garden of Remembrance will be managed and maintained by Amenity Services and has separate guidance in Management Rules for Cardross Crematorium.

Amenity Services Asset Investment Plan contains all burial and cemetery site locations, annual average usage and projected life span of sites.

5 MANAGEMENT RULES FOR CEMETERIES

The management rules for cemeteries are detailed under a separate heading and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

6 STAFF AND TRAINING

In order to deliver a high quality service from office support to grave digging, suitable training will be delivered to all staff at their induction and as identified by departmental Performance & Business Support team. Staff will work in accordance with service delivery manual.

7 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CEMETERIES

A business case will be developed for each site where the options for closure or extension will be appraised encompassing Council strategic Priorities and Vision along with consideration of financial sustainability as part of the future service plans.

Woodland burial sites are covered by the Woodland Burial policy.

8 BURIAL AND STREWING OF ASHES IN CEMETERIES

Holders of the exclusive right of burial for an identified lair will be permitted to strew ashes in that lair having completed the appropriate request form issued by the burial authority. All applications must be accompanied by a certificate of cremation. The Council reserve the right to charge a fee in the event that a record is required to be kept of the scattering of cremated remains.

9 CHARGES AND FEES

The service is provided on a subsidised basis by fees levied for burial set on an annual basis through the Council budget setting process.

Collection of outstanding debt and stopping of service.

The Sundry debtor procedure manual defines agreed procedure for issuing of invoices and collection of debt related to service delivery within Argyll and Bute Council.

Funeral directors shall act as customer of Argyll and Bute Council for all purposes related to delivery of burial and cremation services. Argyll and Bute Council shall pursue a named undertaker under the terms of the Sundry Debt Procedure manual. Where a family choose

not to engage the services of an undertaker to carry out the funeral proceedings the invoices will be sent direct to the funeral arranger who will be pursued for payment under the same terms.

Certificates confirming and identifying that a single named person has purchased and holds ownership of the unique right of burial in an identified lair shall be provided by Argyll and Bute Council to the named owner on their receipt of payment for this service.

Invoicing of Argyll and Bute Council charges for burial and cremation services.
This will be in accordance with Argyll and Bute Council's Fees and Charges.

10 RECORDS AND ARCHIVES

Burial Act Scotland 1855 requires burial authorities to keep records identifying lair holder, name of deceased, date and location of death and burial.

A charge will be made for searches of paper ledgers held by the burial authority.

11 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT /THIRD SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Cemeteries are of particular importance to local communities and the council will assist with reasonable requests for support from external bodies i.e. where community groups are looking to improve or highlight the historical significance within specific sites.

12 CODE OF CREMATION PRACTICE

Argyll and Bute Council will follow the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities Code of Practice 2014. The Council will seek advice from other cremation authorities where it cannot meet the cultural needs of a community.

13 THE SENSITIVE DISPOSAL OF FOETAL REMAINS

The Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management Policy and Policy Statement Relating to the Cremation of Babies and Infants will be used to set the standards of service for the sensitive disposal of foetal remains.

14 BENCH MARKING AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Council will participate in the Scottish Bereavement Benchmarking Group and will report the findings to the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

15 WEBSITE INFORMATION BURIAL AND CREMATION

The Council will provide information on the Council Webpage.

16 REVIEW DATE

MAY 2019