

**CEMETERY ASSET REPORT 2019**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The council is responsible for managing and maintaining burial grounds within the council area. There are 131 cemeteries ranging from small churchyard cemeteries to large 'municipal' cemeteries.
- 1.2 Of the 131 cemeteries within the Argyll and Bute cemetery estate 65 remain available for the purchase of new lairs and 66 are already 'closed' to the sale of lair spaces and are effectively 'full' with only re-openings of existing lairs where depth remains or for the interment of ashes. This current proportion of active 'v' closed cemeteries has been reasonably stable since 2005. Although the cemetery may be classed as closed, under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, local authorities in Scotland are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of burial grounds and crematoriums, which effectively requires a sustained budget to maintain ongoing costs for the upkeep of cemetery grounds.
- 1.3 In order to understand the needs of our communities it is proposed that a consultation is carried out seeking views and comments for our communities on possible policy options for the sustainable management and maintenance of burial grounds.
- 1.4 Argyll and Bute has 65 cemeteries with lair space, however there a number of sites that are expected to run out of space over the next 5 years based on new lairs being taken for each interment. The report outlines a number of options which will form the basis of the consultation.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-
- Agree that a community consultation is undertaken seeking views on the draft policies detailed in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.15.
  - Note that a further report will be presented to Members detailing the consultation feedback and proposing a set of cemetery policies.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The cemetery asset report presents a summary of the council's cemeteries as at September 2019. The report provides current information on the condition of the cemeteries including available lair space. This paper highlights the need for a decision to either reduce the active (live) cemeteries or prioritise funding for cemeteries from the Capital Budget and extend the cemeteries providing more lair space.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee agree:
- Agree that a community consultation is undertaken seeking views on the draft policies detailed in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.15.
  - Note that a further report will be presented to Members detailing the consultation feedback and proposing a set of cemetery policies.

**4.0 DETAIL**

**Cemetery Estate**

- 4.1 Of the 131 cemeteries within the Argyll and Bute estate, 65 are available for the purchase of new lairs and 66 are 'closed' to the sale of lair spaces. The closed cemeteries are effectively 'full' with only openings/reopenings of existing pre purchased lairs for the interment of ashes or internment of coffins, where depth remains. This current ratio of active 'v' closed cemeteries has been reasonably stable since 2005. Although there are 66 closed cemeteries these still require funding to keep the areas safe and maintained. There are currently some 8000 lairs available across Argyll and Bute.
- 4.2 Argyll and Bute has 65 cemeteries with lair space, however the table below details the numbers of burial sites where there is a risk of running out of space over the next 5 years based on new lairs being taken for each internment. No

adjustment has been made to allow for internments being made in lairs which have been sold and have available capacity remaining.

Years capacity based on recent internments (assuming new lairs taken for each internment)	No of cemeteries with capacity remaining in the year banding shown
0 years	2
0 – 1 years	5
1 – 2 years	3
2 – 3 years	1
3 – 4 years	1
4 – 5 years	2

Note – most lairs will accommodate 2 internments, some older lairs can accommodate 3 internments. The above table does not provide a number of available burial spaces, only available new and unused lairs.

### **Cemetery Requirements**

4.3 Section 3 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 states:  
Each local authority:-

(a) must provide one burial ground within the area of the local authority, and  
(b) may provide other burial grounds within that area.

4.4 In line with the above Argyll and Bute Council is only required to provide one functioning burial ground within the local authority area. However given the geographical size and dispersed nature of Argyll and Bute, one burial ground is not considered to provide a practical service to our communities

4.5 **Average Number of burials and Income over the last 3 full years**

### **All Cemetery income**

	<b>Income 2016-17 (£)</b>	<b>Income 2017-18( £)</b>	<b>Income 2018-19 (£)</b>
Interment Fees	-397,740	-422,059	-441,213
Memorials	-39,398	-49,869	-44,563
Other Income	0	0	-88
Sale of Lairs	-188,032	-245,829	-232,003
Search & Genealogy	0	0	-50
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-625,170</b>	<b>-717,757</b>	<b>-717,917</b>

<b>Burial Numbers</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>543</b>
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### **Community Consultation**

- 4.6 The provision of cemetery choice is a personal matter with many individuals wishing to be interned in lairs with loved ones or in locations with family connections. In order to fully understand the desires of our communities it is proposed that the consultation undertaken with up to 10 questions designed to gauge an understanding of individual needs and expectations. The survey will also seek views on the proposed cemetery policies detailed in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.15 below. The survey approach will broadly follow the successful waste strategy survey approach which received over 900 responses.

### **Current Cemetery Model**

- 4.7 The current cemetery model operated by the council is based on:
- No further development of closed cemeteries, internments only taking place in existing lairs where space allows. No new lairs are available or will be provided in closed cemeteries.
  - Available lairs sold on request in the 65 cemeteries where lairs are available, internments carried out on request and ad hoc work carried out to extend cemeteries to meet demand where extension works are cost effective and achievable. Some locations may not be considered suitable for an extension (i.e. land adjacent to an existing cemetery that has one of more of the following: high rock level, running sand, a steep gradient, has access difficulties or not meeting planning requirements).

### **An asset management approach**

- 4.8 This report is proposing that an asset management approach is taken going forward for the management of future cemeteries. As part of the development of an asset management policy a consultation with communities on the future provision of cemeteries including future capacity, is proposed.
- 4.9 Funding for cemetery extensions would come from either the existing capital block allocation or from prudential borrowing funded through cemetery income, depending on the demand for physical works and available budget. Appendix 1 sets out works which would be required in priority order given the number of available lairs.

### **Policy position for burials**

- 4.10 The following draft policies are proposed for consultation:
- The council seeks to get to a position over the next 10 years where all open cemeteries have a target of a minimum 10 years burial capacity based on a rolling 5 year average of previous internment numbers. The

policy is caveated based on the deliverability of additional lairs at any particular burial site, which will be assessed on a case by case basis

- New lairs are sold with an option for the council to claw back the lair if not used in 50 years from the date of purchase.

These policies if adopted may need to be reviewed in the future subject to budget availability.

### Options for consideration

- 4.11 An alternative to the above proposals could be progressing a plan (over several years) where we could look to reduce the number of live burial grounds in each of our 4 administrative areas with additional burial grounds on each of the main islands. The advantage of this option would be reduced future development costs and reduced operating costs, however, this would have to be carefully balanced against the expectations of our communities for the council to provide a proportionate and reasonable burial ground provision.

### Reclaiming unused lairs

- 4.12 From available records there are some 8000 available unused lairs across Argyll and Bute's cemeteries. There are also some additional 1439 lairs which have been sold but not used with 70 years having elapsed since the sale, these remain empty. It is proposed that further research is carried out to firm up on the viability of seeking to claim back the unused lairs in areas where there is a shortage of lairs. Given the passage of time since the lairs were registered it would be an extensive piece of work tracing relatives and owners, many simply would be unlikely to be traced. However, it is suggested that it would be worth researching this further and reporting back on findings.

The Table below details the number of lairs which can potentially be claimed back in each area:

Number of Empty Owned Lairs	
Bute	167
Cowal	162
Helensburgh and Lomond	759
Islay and Jura	152
Mid Argyll	60
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	139
<b>Total</b>	<b>1439</b>

### Ongoing cemetery works and development

- 4.13 Over recent years the operational focus has been on designing and delivering alternative service delivery models within reducing budgets. This has resulted

in our operations teams having limited capacity to focus on forward planning for service areas such as cemetery development. The new structure introduced in December 2018 has been designed to provide support to the operations team through the Network and Standards team and control hub concept, one aspect of which focusses on long-term asset management. The development work and proposals detailed in this report have resulted from the refocus on activities introduced by the new structure.

### **Grass and Grounds Maintenance**

- 4.14 A separate report is scheduled for the March ED&I Committee which will consider cemetery maintenance and frequency of grass cutting.

### **Community involvement**

- 4.15 A small number of community groups are working with the council to help provide maintenance works within burial grounds. This model works well and encouragement will be given to community groups to participate in similar initiatives across the council area.

### **Provision of an additional crematorium**

- 4.16 Consideration has been given to the provision of a second crematorium in north Argyll to provide an alternative to burial and relieve pressure on the demand for burial plots. However, costs are estimated to be in the region of £7 – 10M which are unlikely to be cost effective. From the information available, it is unlikely that a business case would support development and it is proposed that no further work is carried out on this proposal.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report provides an update on the council's cemetery estate and proposes that an asset management approach for land availability is consulted on. The survey results together with proposals for cemetery development proposals will be presented to a future meeting of this committee.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – This report seeks to establish a policy position for burial grounds and cemeteries.
- 6.2 Financial – Current investment levels do not support the need to extend cemeteries which will require closure to new burials if funding is not prioritised in line with officer's recommendations.
- 6.3 Legal – Argyll and Bute Council is legally required to provide at least one cemetery.

- 6.4 HR – None known
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None known
  - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None Known
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None known
  - 6.5.3 Islands – None known
- 6.6 Risk – Cemeteries and associated infrastructure will deteriorate. Lairs may not be available for burials in some communities.
- 6.7 Customer Service – Lack of cemetery spaces may result in families having to bury deceased family members away from their local area.

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**Policy Lead Councillor Robin Currie**

October 2019

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Hierarchy of Cemetery Development and Extensions

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<b>HIERARCHY OF NEED</b>			
<b>Cemeteries ACTIVE Expectancy - YEARS</b>			
<b>Shortest time to expiry of available lairs decending.</b>			
<b>CEMETERY</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>LAIRS AVAILABLE FOLLOWING CLAIM BACK</b>	<b>NEW ACTIVE EXPECTANCY YEARS ( full )</b>
Appin New Extension	Lorn	0.0	0
Lismore	Lorn	0.0	0
Kilmorich	Cowal	2.0	1
Pennyfuir Section Q	Lorn	1.0	1
Kilmun	Cowal	31.0	1
Carrick	Mid-Argyll	19.0	1
Pennyfuir	Lorn	101.0	1
Tobermory (New)Beadoun	Mull	12.0	2
Strachur	Cowal	14.0	2
Cowal High Road	Cowal	123.0	2
Achnaba Ex 1 & 2 (Gifted)	Lorn	3.0	3
Kilkerran Extension	Kintyre	187.0	4
Calgary	Mull	5.0	5
Kilchatten	Colonsay ( MAKI)	15.0	5
Pennygowan	Mull	36.0	6
Achnabreac Section K	Mid-Argyll	70.0	6
Kingarth extension	Bute	50.0	7
Kilmodan	Cowal	9.0	9
Clachan (New)	Kintyre	46.0	9
Putechan	Kintyre	38.0	10
Lochgoilhead	Cowal	20.0	10
Kilbrandon Old	Lorn	40.0	11