

POLICY FOR PROVISION OF WOODLAND AND GREEN BURIALS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a covering report to a policy document proposing a policy for green and woodland burials. This policy has been designed to provide choice for individuals and loved ones of deceased who are seeking an alternative to a traditional burial.

Initial costs to establish 4 woodland burial areas can be met from existing budgets. Any further development may require additional budget provision.

Members are asked to:

- Note and endorse the report.
- Approve that the Green and Woodland Burials Policy be taken to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval as Council policy.

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2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report is a covering report to a policy document proposing a policy for green and woodland burials. This policy has been designed to provide choice for individuals and loved ones of deceased who are seeking an alternative to a traditional burial.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:

- Note and endorse the report.
- Approve that the Green and Woodland Burials Policy be taken to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval as Council policy.

4.0 DETAILS

4.1 Background

The purpose of this policy document is to offer choice to individuals in terms of funeral provision. Currently the Council operate some 65 cemeteries where burials are regularly carried out and a further 66 closed cemeteries (open to the public to visit but no capacity to receive any further interments) are maintained by the Council. Over the last 3 years the Council has carried out an average of 599 burials per year. The Council also carries out approximately 550 cremations per year at Cardross Crematorium.

Each year the Council receive a limited number of enquiries from individuals seeking a green or woodland burial. As the concept of green and woodland burial becomes more popular there is an expectation that the number of enquiries will increase. Environmentally-friendly funeral provision is, for some, a logical extension of an environmentally-aware lifestyle. Conventional burials can be made more environmentally friendly and a limited number of individuals choose this route. Currently the Council is not able to provide a woodland burial service.

This policy has been developed to allow Argyll and Bute Council to offer a different style of service to customers; it also offers an opportunity to forge new working partnerships with other service providers such as funeral directors.

The provisions of green and woodland burial services are not statutory requirements and therefore any additional costs to the Council over and above a conventional burial should be recovered through the charging regime.

The charges for the service will reflect the actual cost of providing burial space and long-term maintenance of the site.

4.2 Proposals

The policy document details some of the initiatives that are available for green burials. The policy document also proposes that 4 cemeteries (one in each Area Committee area) have space made available to allow woodland burials to take place.

Woodland burials are essentially burials in a less formal setting than traditional cemeteries. Woodland burials consist of shallower, single interment graves. The maintenance standards are more in keeping with a natural woodland setting, with grass being generally cut only once per growing season. Trees are planted at or near the grave to provide a tree canopy over time. Funeral processes and the type and construction of coffins are also more sympathetic to the environment.

Woodland burials require more land due to the low density of lairs and the single interment which reduces the number of interments by comparison to similar areas of land in conventional cemeteries. Due to the above it is proposed that a lair price in a woodland burial setting be twice that of a conventional lair. The burial price would be the same as a conventional burial.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report is a covering report to a policy document proposing a policy for green and woodland burials. This policy has been designed to provide choice for individuals and loved ones of deceased who are seeking an alternative to a traditional burial.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 6.1 | Policy | Promotes a policy for green and woodland burials. |
| 6.2 | Financial | Initial costs to establish 4 woodland burial areas can be met from existing budgets. Any further development may require additional budget provision. |
| 6.3 | Legal | Covered in the policy. |

6.4	HR	None
6.5	Equalities	Policy ensures choice for individuals and individual's families and loved ones regarding green and woodland burials.
6.6	Risk	None
6.7	Customer Services	None

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

Policy Lead Councillor Ellen Morton

June 2014

For further information contact: Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Amenity Services

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Green and Woodland Burial Policy