



## Argyll and Bute Council Cemetery Consultation Paper

1. Argyll and Bute Council, along with other Local Authorities across Scotland is experiencing increasing pressure on burial land within its area. The council is responsible for managing and maintaining 131 cemeteries which range from small churchyard cemeteries to large municipal cemeteries. Although a cemetery may be classed as closed, under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, local authorities in Scotland are responsible for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of burial grounds. This effectively requires a sustained budget to maintain ongoing costs for the upkeep of cemetery grounds, the council spends £905k per year on cemeteries alone.
  - 1.1 The upkeep of cemetery grounds is not just about cutting the grass surface, other large expenses for Burial Authorities are the ongoing re-levelling of lairs due to settlement followed by strimming round headstones which do not have memorial borders. To ensure sustainable options for looking after the dead in Argyll and Bute, we need to review our cemetery management policy now which includes standard lair borders and memorial headstones to reduce the amount of labour intensive upkeep required.
2. The five main cemeteries in Argyll and Bute are:
  - Helensburgh Cemetery
  - Cowal Cemetery, Dunoon
  - Kilkerran Cemetery, Campbeltown
  - Ach nabreac, Lochgilphead
  - Pennyfuir, Oban.
3. Of the 131 cemeteries in the Argyll and Bute cemetery estate, 64 remain available for the purchase of new lairs. Sixty seven are already 'closed' to the sale of lair spaces and have space only to allow for the re-opening of existing lairs where depth remains or for the interment of ashes.
4. Argyll and Bute Council currently sell burial lairs for open cemeteries only, however we estimate in the next five years we will have sold all available lairs in 12 cemeteries and in ten years another 9 cemeteries.
5. Action is now needed to allow a planned and sustainable cemetery portfolio which delivers best value across Argyll and Bute. Without effective planning, we will have areas with far more burial lairs available than others.
6. Current records show there are:
  - 8,000 available lairs for sale across Argyll and Bute's cemeteries.

Effectively we do have sufficient lair space across our cemetery portfolio, however we are, year on year, reducing the number of cemeteries with available lairs to be sold. This means in certain areas local burials will not be possible in the cemetery of choice and will have to take place in another cemetery. Please see below table with the TOTAL available lairs by District/Area.

SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE LAIRS FOR SALE  
(as of November 2019)

DISTRICT	TOTAL	AREA	TOTAL RECORDED LAIRS AVAILABLE FOR SALE
Cardross	1656		
Lomond	1031	H & L	2687
Bute	439		
Cowal	596	B & C	1035
Mid-Argyll	534		
Kintyre	700		
Islay/Jura	1111		
Colonsay	15	MAKI	2360
Mull	556		
Lorn	1068		
Coll	59		
Tiree	259	OLI	1942
Total lairs available for sale in Cemetery Books			8024

- There are also some additional 1,439 lairs which have been sold but not used with 70 years having elapsed since the sale, these remain empty.

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>

#### 7. Current Cemetery Policy:

- No further development of closed cemeteries, interments 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 64 cemeteries where lairs are available, interments carried out when required and ad hoc work carried out to extend cemeteries to meet demand where extension works are cost effective and achievable.

#### 8. Community Group Partnership Working:

8.1 Argyll and Bute like other Scottish Local Authorities are experiencing budget cuts and reduced resources. As part of a solution to the upkeep of their Cemeteries various Highland Councillors and volunteers have supported their local authority by cutting and strimming grass in their local cemeteries which has had very positive community feedback.

8.2 Argyll and Bute Council feel it would worthwhile engaging with our local communities to gauge their views on whether there would be sufficient community volunteer support to assist in the upkeep of our cemeteries which will in turn identify a sustainable method of balancing community burial needs with our statutory duty in line with best value and reductions to funding.

## 9. Memorial Borders:

9.1 Memorabilia, mementoes and ornamentation of the lair must be kept within the memorial border. The memorial border is the area of ground at the head of the lair adjacent to the headstone and 75mm (3 inches) from the designated grass edge. Kerbs, copes, corner stones, railings, pebbles/gravel etc are only permitted in the approved memorial border. Pebbles/gravel must be contained by a solid border that is 50mm higher than the gravel to ensure there is no spillage to the surrounding area. The lair-holder will be responsible for the maintenance of the area within a solid border or fenced off area. The memorial border for burial lairs will be a maximum of 600mm from the designated backline or centre line of the foundation strip. The memorial border for casket lairs will be a maximum of 500mm from the backline or centre line of the foundation strip. Please refer to Appendix 1 which contains a diagram for ease of reference.

## 10. Key Aims of our Cemetery Consultation:

We need to take steps now to ensure that options are available for people when they need them in the future. We have identified various options, and would like to find out what our communities think before developing plans for Argyll and Bute in the longer term. We anticipate options would take 10 years to develop and implement, so things would not change quickly.

- Over the next 10 years we would like all open cemeteries to have a target of at least 10 years burial capacity based on a rolling 5 year average of previous interment 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
- We will stop developing and extending 56 of our current 64 remaining sites ONLY once all of the available lair space is exhausted.
- Future Development of Cemeteries will only be carried out in Bute, Campbeltown/Kintyre, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Oban, Islay and Mull main cemeteries.
- New lairs are now sold in line with the Burial and Cremations Scotland Act 2016 which means burial rights are no longer indefinite. Therefore the Council has the ability to reclaim the lair if not used in 50 years after the date of purchase.
- If there are areas where Community Groups would like to work with us to provide partnership maintenance works within burial grounds, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss that.

11. Based on these options, we plan to run the following public consultation. This can be accessed here: [Cemeteries Consultation](#).

## Appendix 1 - Memorial Border and Headstone standard details

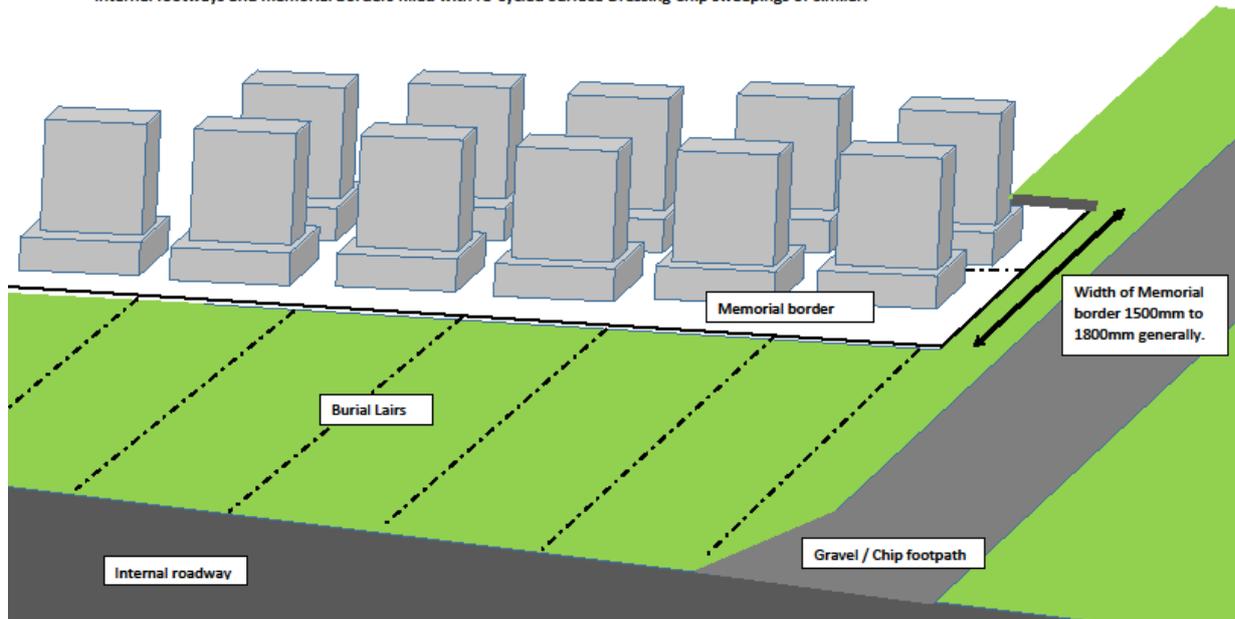
### Memorial Border Standard Configuration.

#### Cemetery and Burial Grounds

#### Standard Detail – Memorial Border details.

Memorial border based on centreline of headstone strip foundation, generally 750 - 900mm either side of a double row of headstones.

Internal footways and memorial borders filled with re-cycled Surface Dressing Chip sweepings or similar.



## Headstone Standard configuration and Fixing Details.

