

Agenda Item	11
Report No	CP/31/23

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 29 November 2023

**Report Title:** Bereavement Services – Project Updates

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the Council's Bereavement services capital projects to maintain burial ground capacity and crematorium services for the Highlands.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i. the progress of burial ground extensions in Highland
- ii. the progress for cremator replacement at Inverness Crematorium
- iii. the intention to commission a detailed options appraisal on the provision of a Crematorium in the Lochaber Area

## 3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** – The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for bereavement services of £2.226m for 2023/24 and £4.168m for 2024/25 - 2028/29.

3.2 **Legal** – The Council has a statutory obligation to manage burial provision, memorial safety and cremations as set out in the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – The burial ground capacity project works with local communities where there may be changes to future burial ground provision in an area.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – There are not considered to be Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications related to the burial ground capacity projects. Energy use and ongoing compliance with emission standards are key factors in projects related to any changes to the cremation plant at Inverness Crematorium and appropriate technical advice will be taken for these projects.

3.5 **Risk** – If burial ground extensions or new sites are not provided there is a risk that the Council will be unable to provide burials in some locations to meet the expectations

and preferences of communities. The establishment of a project board for proactive oversight and support for projects serves to reduce service risks.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – The safety of staff and visitors in burial grounds is a statutory obligation for local authorities and memorial safety inspections are undertaken to reduce risks.

3.7 **Gaelic** – There are not considered to be any Gaelic implications.

#### 4. Background

4.1 Section 3 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 requires each local authority to provide at least one burial ground within its area. The Highland Council has 245 burial grounds and Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of burial grounds per ward. The Highland Council also operates Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness.

4.2 The table below details the number of cremations and burials undertaken in the last few years:

Year	No. Cremations	No. Burials	totals
2017	1127	1690	2817
2018	1240	1771	3011
2019	1237	1594	2831
2020	1239	1445	2684
2021	1264	1713	2977
2022	1403	1677	3080

#### 5. Burial Ground Capacity Projects

5.1 Through the capital programme the Council aims to provide appropriate burial ground provision in the Highlands. The team are reviewing burial ground extensions where current capacity is less than 10 years based on past trends. Information on burials and lair sales is monitored on a weekly basis following submission from all bereavement services administrative teams.

5.2 As members are aware, a project board is in place to support the work of the team delivering burial ground extensions and new sites. The board ensures good governance in delivering the programme and the remit has been expanded to include all bereavement services capital projects including:

- Projects to develop burial ground extensions and new burial ground sites.
- Projects to maintain, develop and improve Inverness Crematorium
- Projects to maintain existing burial grounds including works related to the memorial safety programme.
- Projects to support communities to maintain existing war memorials.

5.3 The Board recognises the challenges in some areas with burial ground provision with it becoming increasingly difficult to identify available land for development of extensions or for new burial grounds. These challenges are most prevalent in Lochaber. The reasons include:

- a) land availability and purchase cost.
- b) developments costs.
- c) land suitability and geology – land conditions and requirements must comply with SEPA guidelines for burial grounds, be relatively flat land with little or no rock formations.
- d) regulatory requirements – the selection of any new sites or extensions must not cause any pollution to the environment, including groundwater and this is regulated by SEPA.
- e) acceptability with local Planning considerations.

5.4 The team are progressing the priority sites and the Bereavement Services Project Manager has liaised with members on priority sites where there are significant challenges such as in the Fort William area. Progress on the current approved projects is summarised in **Appendix 2**.

5.5 As can be seen, all projects are on track with a green RAG status apart from Glen Nevis, Lochaber. Good work has been undertaken by the bereavement services team, local amenities team, the project design unit, estates and legal to progress solutions with the support and input of local members.

5.6 Projects recently completed include works on existing sites at Portree and Broadford Strath. Additional lairs have been identified and prepared on the burial grounds which ensures effective use of the existing asset and allows additional time to progress the extension projects. **Appendix 3** provides photos of recently completed works at Portree and Strath.

5.7 As highlighted, Glen Nevis burial ground in Fort William is estimated to reach full capacity by the end of 2025. Significant work has been done locally to identify a new site with adverts being placed in local press and over 25 sites being reviewed. Unfortunately, ground conditions are challenging, and a suitable site has yet to be identified. Investigations are ongoing into possible sites and local members will continue to be updated on the position.

5.8 In addition to the specific capital approved for 23/24, the team have been taking forward priority works through an approved £400k for bereavement services from the Health and Prosperity Strategy investment. This has been beneficial in taking forward additional projects as detailed in the table below. The balance of funding was £210k at April 2023 and the estimated outturn is a nil balance by March 2024.

Name	Area	Comments
Daviot	Inverness (Ward 19)	Works complete - lairs available in extension. 50 years+ capacity (£83k)
Cill a'Bhealaich	Skye (Ward 10)	Contract awarded to increase capacity on existing site - additional 38 lairs (approx. 6 years capacity) (£15k). Works to commence in November 2023.
Portnalong	Skye (Ward 10)	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed (budget estimate £20k)
Morar Beoraid	Lochaber (Ward 11)	Additional capacity on existing site - 80 lairs (approx. 11.1 years additional capacity) (£20k). Works underway.
Lohcarron	Wester Ross (Ward 5)	Additional capacity - additional 100 lairs (approx. 20 yrs capacity) (£10k). Works to be undertaken in 23/24
Kishorn	Wester Ross (Ward 5)	Land investigation undertaken (£3k)
St Duthus	Tain (Ward 7)	Land available for future extension - investigation undertaken, with test digs being reviewed (budget estimate £30k)

Skeabost/Borve	Skye (Ward 10)	Land available for site – investigations being undertaken (budget estimate £25k)
Ullapool Morefield	Wester Ross (Ward 5)	Additional capacity on existing site complete - additional 36 lairs (approx. 10 years additional capacity) (£17k) created through reconfiguration of a road and storage area. Further works planned on existing extension to allow significant number of lairs to be available for sale, with 50 years+ capacity (budget estimate £13k).
Portree	Skye (Ward 10)	Works complete to create additional capacity on existing site - 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity). (£6k)
Duror	Lochaber (Ward 21)	Works planned on existing site to allow lairs to be available for sale with estimated 25 years+ capacity (budget estimate £20k)
Croy	Inverness (Ward 17)	Works planned on existing extension to allow significant number of lairs to be available for sale with estimated 50 years+ capacity (budget estimate £20k)
Inverness Crematorium	Inverness (Ward 13)	£100k identified to facilitate installation of new memorial options and improve site for visitors including new paths and improvements to the flower court and cloisters area. This also includes white-lining in the car park and painting of the hand rails and external doors all of which are complete.

5.9 Work is ongoing to review detailed projects for the capital budget for 2024/25 - 2028/29 of £4.168m. As shown in **Appendix 4**, current data indicates 28 additional burial grounds that will require capital expenditure to provide extensions or new sites. The bereavement services team will continue to engage with local members on projects in their area. As previously agreed, annual update reports will be taken to area committees, and this is being progressed with the latest report having been taken to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee on 6 November 2023.

## 6. Inverness Crematorium

- 6.1 Inverness Crematorium provides a full cremation service for the Highlands, with over 1400 cremations conducted in 2022. The crematorium is inspected annually by Scottish Government inspectors and every 5 years by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.
- 6.2 As members are aware, work has started on a project to review the options for replacement of the current cremators. There are two key drivers for this project:
- The UK Government have indicated tighter emission standards for crematorium will be required. Although an exact date has yet to be confirmed there are indications that updated plant will be required in 2027 for both existing and new crematorium.
  - Unfortunately, the supplier of the current cremators, ATI, has ceased trading. Arrangements are in place for the regular servicing and maintenance of the plant.
- 6.3 The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for the replacement of the cremators at the Inverness Crematorium of £1.2m.
- 6.4 A consultant's report has been commissioned to review the options for Inverness Crematorium. A draft report has been received and is being reviewed by officers. An update will be provided to members on the project when the final report is received.
- 6.5 Note that given the current challenges with burial ground provision in the Lochaber area the Consultant's report will also provide a high level overview of the feasibility of a crematorium in the Lochaber area. The intention is then to commission a detailed

options appraisal for a Crematorium in the Lochaber area to help better understand a range of key matters including costs (set-up and annual recurring) and environmental.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place

Date: 9 November 2023

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Background Papers:

## Appendix 1 – Burial Grounds in Highland

<b>Ward</b>	<b>No. of Cemeteries</b>	<b>No. of those operational</b>	<b>No. of those closed</b>
1 - North, West and Central Sutherland	25	16	9
2 - Thurso and Northwest Caithness	7	6	1
3 - Wick and East Caithness	7	6	1
4 - East Sutherland and Edderton	15	8	7
5 - Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	34	23	11
6 - Cromarty Firth	4	3	1
7 - Tain and Easter Ross	11	6	5
8 - Dingwall and Seaforth	6	3	3
9 - Black Isle	16	7	9
10 - Eilean a' Cheo	31	16	15
11 - Caol and Mallaig	10	5	5
12 - Aird and Loch Ness	25	20	5
13 - Inverness West	2	1	1
14 - Inverness Central	3	0	3
15 - Inverness Ness-side	0	0	0
16 - Inverness Millburn	0	0	0
17 - Culloden and Ardersier	6	3	3
18 - Nairn and Cawdor	7	4	3
19 - Inverness South	3	3	0
20 - Badenoch and Strathspey	20	10	10
21 - Fort William and Ardnamurchan	13	8	5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>97</b>

## Appendix 2 – Current approved capital projects

	2023/24 Capital Budget £000	Project status RAG	Date of estimated full capacity	Works start date	Works duration (months)	Site works to be completed	Estimated site settlement (months)	Go live date	Comments
Tore, Black Isle (Ward 9)	25	<b>G</b>	04/07/2025	08/08/2024	5	05/01/2025	6	04/07/2025	Option for additional capacity on existing site identified and works to be arranged. Land investigation underway for extension
Mount Vernon, Thurso (Ward 2)	50	<b>G</b>	01/08/2025	05/09/2024	5	02/02/2025	6	01/08/2025	Land investigation underway for new extension.
Glen Nevis (Ward 21)	250	<b>R</b>	06/12/2025	14/06/2024	12	09/06/2025	6	06/12/2025	Site identification ongoing - 20+ sites around Fort William investigated and found unsuitable. Further site being investigated.
Portree (Ward 10)	525	<b>G</b>	31/01/2026	07/03/2025	5	04/08/2025	6	31/01/2026	Work progressing for next phase - phases 2A, 2B & 2C = around 600 lairs. Contract completed to increase capacity on existing site - additional 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity).
Canisbay (Ward 3)	230	<b>G</b>	01/03/2026	05/04/2025	5	02/09/2025	6	01/03/2026	Design work to be finalised and then work to be tendered.
Dunvegan, Skye (Ward 10)	280	<b>G</b>	13/08/2026	17/09/2025	5	14/02/2026	6	13/08/2026	Works to allow for additional capacity of approx. 2 years in existing burial ground now complete. Land purchase for extension concluded. Design work to complete in November and planning application to be submitted by end of year.
Reay, Sutherland (Ward 2)	50	<b>G</b>	11/03/2027	15/04/2026	5	12/09/2026	6	11/03/2027	Site planning progressing - options for extension being considered - additional land owned by THC in immediate area.
Tornagrain, Inverness (Ward 17)	20	<b>G</b>	07/08/2027	09/05/2027	1	08/06/2027	2	07/08/2027	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed - possibility of 60 additional lairs (approx. 2 years additional capacity). Land investigation underway for extension

Alness (Ward 6)	250	<b>G</b>	11/10/2027	15/11/2026	5	14/04/2027	6	11/10/2027	Site acquisition progressing with land negotiations ongoing. Design prepared - phase 1 to provide 240 lairs (approx. 24 years capacity).
Tomnacross, Kiltarlity (Ward 12)	30	<b>G</b>	29/11/2028	04/01/2028	5	02/06/2028	6	29/11/2028	Land acquisition ongoing. Additional capacity on existing site identified and site plan to be updated (approx. 4 additional years capacity).
Broadford Strath, Skye (Ward 10)	110	<b>G</b>	31/12/2029	04/02/2029	5	04/07/2029	6	31/12/2029	Contract completed to increase capacity on existing site - additional 84 lairs (approx. 7.5 years additional capacity). Land acquisition to secure land for next phase is concluding.
Kilmorack (Ward 12)	30	<b>G</b>	20/03/2030	24/04/2029	5	21/09/2029	6	20/03/2030	Land acquisition ongoing
Chapelhill (Ward 7)	75		Complete		-	-	-	-	Site works complete - 82 lairs in first phase (around 40yrs based on 2 lairs/yr). Landscaping works ongoing.
Proncynain, Dornoch (Ward 4)	176	<b>G</b>	Complete		-	-	-	-	Site works completed - Total capacity 722 lairs - around 70 years based on 10 lairs/yr. Landscaping works ongoing.
Dores (Ward 12)	50	<b>G</b>	Closed					-	Design work ongoing.

**Appendix 3 – Photos of recent projects**

**Portree Burial ground – new lairs in existing burial ground**



**Strath Cemetery (Broadford) – new lairs in existing burial ground**



#### Appendix 4 – sites being reviewed for projects in next 10 years

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Estimated closed date</b>
Kinlochmore	Lochaber	12/11/2026
Blarour	Lochaber	06/02/2027
Wick	Caithness	30/06/2027
Petty - Tornagrain	Inverness	08/08/2027
Roskeen	Ross & Cromarty	26/03/2028
Abernethey	Badenoch & Strathspey	24/04/2029
Kilvean	Inverness	24/04/2029
Morar Beoraid	Lochaber	26/05/2029
Cille a'Bhealaich	Skye & Lochalsh	20/10/2029
Portmahomack Tarbat	Ross & Cromarty	25/03/2030
Kingussie New	Badenoch & Strathspey	15/06/2030
Lairg	Sutherland	26/01/2032
Golspie New/Old	Sutherland	08/03/2032
Melness	Caithness	06/05/2032
Urray West Church/Urray New	Ross & Cromarty	03/10/2032
Watten	Caithness	13/10/2032
Laggantygown	Badenoch & Strathspey	22/01/2033
Halkirk	Caithness	09/03/2033
Tore	Ross & Cromarty	05/07/2033
Kirkhill (Wardlaw)	Inverness	03/10/2033
Corsback	Caithness	21/10/2033
Cawdor	Nairn	17/12/2033
Kiltarlity	Inverness	04/02/2034
Ardgour	Lochaber	25/08/2034
Ardersier	Inverness	03/01/2035
Annat	Ross & Cromarty	12/03/2036
Skeabost	Skye & Lochalsh	currently closed
Arisaig	Lochaber	currently closed