

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	CP/30/24

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 27 November 2024

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

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - 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:-

- i. **NOTE** the progress of current projects on burial ground extensions and Inverness Crematorium refurbishment; and
- ii. **NOTE** future burial ground extension projects in Highland.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for bereavement services, with budget of £2.931m for identified projects in 2024/25 and £3.068m for 2025/26 - 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 **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.
- 3.4 **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.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – There are not considered to be any Gaelic implications.

#### 4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

#### 5. Background

- 5.1 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. The Highland Council also operates Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness.
- 5.2 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
2023	1387	1716	3103
2024 to 31/10/24	1072	1351	2423

#### 6. Burial Ground Capacity Projects

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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; and

- projects to support communities to maintain existing war memorials.

6.3 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. The reasons include:-

- land availability and purchase cost;
- developments costs;
- 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;
- 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; and
- acceptability with local Planning considerations.

6.4 Progress on the current approved projects is summarised in **Appendix 1**.

6.5 As can be seen, all projects are on track with a green RAG status apart from Glen Nevis, Lochaber. The Glen Nevis burial ground in Fort William is estimated to reach full capacity by the end of 2025. Significant work has been done locally with over 40 sites considered but unfortunately, ground conditions are very challenging in the area. Work is being progressed at a site adjacent to the current cemetery to improve ground conditions. A planning application has been submitted for Phase 1 of the works to allow for significant drainage works to take place.

6.6 At Kilvean burial ground in Inverness, drainage works have been completed for the next extension. When complete this area will provide 1600 lairs, approximately another 10 years capacity. The PDU team are designing further improvements to the drainage at Kilvean which will allow a number of unused areas within the existing site to be utilised for future lairs. Long term planning for the Inverness area will require a new burial ground and initial land investigations are underway to identify a suitable site for this development.

6.7 In addition to the projects in **Appendix 1**, the team are progressing investigations and works at the following locations:-

Name	Area	Comments
Portnalong	Skye (Ward 10)	Additional lairs to be created on existing site (budget estimate £5k).
St Duthus	Tain (Ward 7)	Land purchase for next extension phase ongoing (budget estimate £30k).
Skeabost/Borve	Skye (Ward 10)	Potential land available for site – investigations being undertaken (budget estimate £25k).
Duror	Lochaber (Ward 21)	Works to commence to create additional lairs on existing site – approx. 25+ years capacity (budget estimate £20k).
Croy	Inverness (Ward 17)	Works planned to allow significant number of lairs to be available for sale with estimated 50+ years capacity within current cemetery (budget estimate £20k).

6.8 The following projects have been recently completed:-

- Works to extend Canisbay Cemetery, Wick have now been completed. The extension will allow for 500 additional lairs / 80+ additional years capacity in the area.
- Design works for additional lairs within the existing Duror Cemetery, Appin have now been completed and works are expected to be complete before the end of the year. Works will allow for an additional 140 lairs / 20+ years capacity.
- Drainage improvement works at Rosskeen Burial Ground have been completed to address surface water issues that occurred last winter.

6.9 Work is ongoing to review detailed projects for the capital budget for 2025/26 - 2028/29 of £3.068m. As shown in **Appendix 2**, current data indicates 22 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.

## 7. Inverness Crematorium

7.1 Inverness Crematorium provides a full cremation service for the Highlands, with 1387 cremations conducted in 2023. The crematorium is inspected annually by Scottish Government inspectors and every 5 years by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

7.2 As Members are aware, a project group is taking forward the cremator replacement project which includes installation of two new gas-fired bariatric cremators with associated abatement plant. The UK government has indicated that updated plant will be required by 2027 to meet tighter emission standards for crematorium. The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for the Crematorium project of £1.2m with £50k allocated for 2024/25 and £1.15m for 25/26.

7.3 The tender process for the cremators and abatement plant supplier has been completed and the contract has been awarded to Facultatieve Technologies Ltd (FT). FT is Europe's largest supplier of specialist cremation equipment and have been carrying out cremator installations for over 40 years. FT has installed cremators and abatement systems throughout the world including over 150 sites within the UK to date. The company have an experienced maintenance team covering the whole of the UK. Support is provided both remotely via a broadband link-up with the office-based support team and also via their extensive mobile maintenance team. FT has the largest installation and maintenance team available to cover the UK.

7.4 The contract award to FT covers the design, supply and installation of the two cremators and abatement plant. The Project team note that the capital costs of the project including the FT contract, the construction costs of the new extension, professional fees, and contingency, is currently estimated at £1,651,170.20, which is £451,170.20 over the approved capital budget of £1,200,000. This additional estimated costs can be accommodated within the approved capital budget for bereavement services of £3.068m for 2025/26 - 2028/29. The Bereavement Services Capital Project Board will continue to monitor the extension programme ahead of future reviews of the Council's Capital Programme.

- 7.5 The contract award with FT also covers a 20-year maintenance and service contract which will be funded through the Bereavement Services revenue budget as with the existing maintenance and service arrangements.
- 7.6 The aim is for works at Inverness crematorium to be undertaken in 2025 with phasing of the works to minimise any impact on the provision of cremations and services during the refurbishment works.
- 7.7 As Members are aware, a specialist consultant has also been appointed to prepare a detailed feasibility report for the possibility of a crematorium in the Lochaber area. This report has been delayed due to the Inverness Cremator replacement project and will be reported to the Committee early in 2025.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 11 November 2024

Author: Alan Yates, Strategic Lead - Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Current approved capital projects  
Appendix 2 - Sites being reviewed for projects in next 10 years

## Appendix 1 – Current Approved Capital Projects

	<b>Project status RAG</b>	<b>Date of estimated full capacity</b>	<b>Proposed works start date</b>	<b>Go live date</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25 £000</b>	<b>Budget 25/26-28/29 £000</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Glen Nevis burial ground	R	01/01/2026	09/06/2024	01/12/2025	508		Work is being progressed at a site adjacent to the current cemetery to improve ground conditions.
Portree burial ground	G	01/09/2025	06/08/2024	01/08/2025	505		Tender to be returned in November for next extension - phases 2A, 2B & 2C = around 600 lairs.
Petty-Tornagrain burial ground, Inverness	G	01/07/2025	03/12/2024	01/06/2025	40	40	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed - possibility of 60 additional lairs (approx. 2 years additional capacity). Land investigation underway for extension
Mount Vernon burial ground, Thurso	A	01/01/2026	04/06/2025	01/12/2025	180		Land investigation/acquisition underway for new extension. Trial digs taking place in November.
Canisbay burial ground	C	01/07/2030	03/10/2024	01/04/2025	215		Extension works now complete.
Tomnacross burial ground, Kiltarlity	G	01/11/2025	04/04/2025	01/10/2025	30	90	Land acquisition ongoing. Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed.
Dunvegan burial ground, Skye	G	01/04/2027	05/01/2026	01/03/2027	274		Planning application submitted for new extension on adjacent land including new car parking.
Tore burial ground, Black Isle	G	01/08/2026	02/01/2026	01/07/2026	23	95	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed. Land investigation underway for extension.
Reay burial ground, Sutherland	G	01/09/2027	06/08/2026	01/08/2027	120	25	Land investigation/acquisition underway for new extension.
Alness burial ground	G	01/05/2027	03/10/2026	01/04/2027	350		Site acquisition progressing - land negotiations ongoing.
Kinlochmore burial ground	G	01/05/2027	03/10/2026	01/04/2027	15	85	Land investigation underway for new cemetery.
Wick burial ground	G	01/01/2028	06/12/2026	01/12/2027	25	145	Land investigation underway for new cemetery.
Keiss burial ground	G	01/08/2028	03/01/2028	01/07/2028	22	55	Land investigation underway for new extension.

Kilvean burial ground	G	01/05/2029*	07/01/2028	01/04/2029	65	145	*Note 2029 date based on prepared lairs in current phase. Drainage works for new extension completed. PDU designing detailed layout for new extension and updated phasing plan is being prepared.
Kilmorack burial ground	G	01/08/2030	04/10/2024	02/04/2025	30	120	Works to be done on existing site to provide 80+ lairs early in 2025. This will provide around 7 years additional capacity.
Broadford Strath burial ground, Skye	G	01/10/2031	08/06/2030	01/09/2031	54	90	Land purchased. Design work ongoing for future phasing.
Dores burial ground	G		-	-	303		Design work complete. Joint project for road work with Housing. Cemetery works to progress when road complete in early 2025.
Crematorium cremator replacement	G				50	1150	Project group taking forward design and works
War Memorials					19		-
Memorial Safety					39	20	-
Burial Grounds - General					-18	1008	-
					2849	3068	

## Appendix 2 – Sites being reviewed for projects in next 10 years

Cemetery	Area	Estimated closed date
Blarour	Lochaber	Jun-28
Rosskeen	Ross & Cromarty	Feb-29
Abernethy	Badenoch & Strathspey	Mar-30
Portmahomack Tarbat	Ross & Cromarty	Nov-30
Kingussie New	Badenoch & Strathspey	Mar-30
Cille a'Bhealaich	Skye & Lochalsh	Jun-31
Strath (Broadford)	Skye & Lochalsh	Feb-32
Golspie New/Old	Sutherland	May-32
Urray West Church/Urray New	Ross & Cromarty	Jan-34
Lairg	Sutherland	Sept-33
Kirkhill (Wardlaw)	Inverness	May-33
Watten	Caithness	Aug-33
Laggantygown	Badenoch & Strathspey	Mar-34
Melness	Caithness	Jun-34
Halkirk	Caithness	Feb-34
Corsback	Caithness	Mar-34
Cawdor	Nairn	Feb-35
Kiltarlity	Inverness	May-36
Annat	Ross & Cromarty	Dec-35
Ardgour	Lochaber	Sept-35
Ardersier	Inverness	May-37
Inverness new	Inverness	-