

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	6
Report No	BSAC-09-25

**Committee:**            **Badenoch and Strathspey**

**Date:**                **28 April 2025**

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

**Report By:**          **Assistant Chief Executive – Place**

## **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Members on the work being undertaken on burial ground capacity and new burial grounds in the Badenoch and Strathspey area.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the progress of burial ground extensions in the Badenoch and Strathspey area; and
- ii. **Note** the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development

## **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.
- 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 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 an update 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 with 20 being within the Badenoch and Strathspey area. Of these, 10 are operational and 10 are closed. **Appendix 1** provides a breakdown of lair availability and capacity data for burial grounds in Badenoch and Strathspey.

#### **6 Burial Ground Capacity Projects in the Badenoch and Strathspey area**

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 The Bereavement Services Project Board meets regularly, to support the work of the team delivering burial ground extensions and new sites. The board ensures good governance in delivering the programme and membership includes key internal partners in delivering the projects such as the Estates management team, the Project Design Unit and Finance.

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:-

- a) land availability and purchase cost;
- b) developmental 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; and
- e) acceptability with local Planning considerations.

5.4 Three burial grounds within the Badenoch and Strathspey area have less than 10 years current capacity; Abernethy, Kingussie New and Laggantygown:-

- Abernethy Burial Ground – there is space within the current cemetery boundary to create additional lairs for use, early estimations indicate space for up to 60 lairs, resulting in anticipated capacity being increased to over 14 years.
- Kingussie New Burial Ground – there is space within the current cemetery boundary to create additional lairs for use. Early estimations indicate space for up to 250 lairs, resulting in over 50 years additional capacity.
- Laggantygown Burial Ground – there is space within the current cemetery boundary to create additional lairs for use. Early estimations indicate space for up to 175 lairs, resulting in over 25 years additional capacity.

5.5 Work is still ongoing to review detailed projects for the current capital budget for 2024/25 - 2028/29 of £4.168m. The bereavement services team will continue to engage with local Members on projects in their area and their ongoing support is appreciated.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 7 April 2025

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Badenoch and Strathspey Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

## Appendix 1 – Badenoch and Strathspey Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Figures as of 30/03/2025. Figures reported weekly.

Name	Ward	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Abernethy	20	Open	31	6.3	5.0
Advie	20	Open	68	0.5	136.0
Alvie	20	Closed	-	-	-
Ardverikie St Kenneth's	20	Closed	-	-	-
Banchor	20	Open	447	7.3	61.0
Carrbridge	20	Open	171	3.3	52.6
Cromdale	20	Open	27	1.3	21.6
Duthil	20	Closed	-	-	-
Grantown	20	Open	441	10.7	41.3
Insh	20	Open	257	4.0	64.3
Inverallen	20	Closed	-	-	-
Kincardine	20	Closed	-	-	-
Kingussie High Street	20	Closed	-	-	-
Kingussie Mill Road	20	Closed	-	-	-
Kingussie New	20	Open	29	4.3	6.7
Kingussie St Columba's	20	Closed	-	-	-
Laggan	20	Open	47	0.4	112.8
Laggantygown	20	Open	61	6.3	9.8
Rothiemurchus St John Episcopal	20	Closed	-	-	-
Rothiemurchus The Doune	20	Closed	-	-	-