

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	12
Report No	SR/23/25

Committee: Isle of Skye and Raasay

Date: 1 September 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 and/or extended burial grounds in the Isle of Skye and Raasay area.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** the current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Isle of Skye and Raasay 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 **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 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 247 burial grounds with 40 being within the Isle of Skye and Raasay area. Of these, 20 are operational and 20 are closed. **Appendix 1** provides a breakdown of lair availability and capacity data for burial grounds within the area.

6 Burial Ground Capacity Projects in the Isle of Skye and Raasay 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.

- 6.4 Two burial grounds within the Isle of Skye and Raasay area, currently included in the capital programme, have less than ten years of remaining capacity
- Portree Burial Ground – Construction works for the extension, new access road, and car park were completed in July 2025. Landscaping and snagging works are scheduled to follow. The new extension is expected to provide approximately 20 to 30 years of additional burial capacity.
 - Dunvegan Burial Ground – Design work for the burial ground extension has been completed, with construction expected to commence in Spring 2026. The full extension area is projected to provide over 70 years of additional burial capacity.
- 6.5 Although not currently included in the capital programme, a further two burial grounds within the area have less than ten years of remaining capacity:
- Strath (Broadford) Burial Ground – Additional rows were added to the burial ground in 2023, increasing its immediate capacity. Furthermore, surrounding land has been acquired to enable future expansion.
 - Cille a'Bhealaich – Works to add additional rows within the existing burial ground boundary were completed in 2023. There remains further space within the site to accommodate future extensions.
- 6.6 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: 4 August 2025

Author: John MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager
Rachel Robertson, Bereavement Services Project Coordinator

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Isle of Skye and Raasay Burial
Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Appendix 1 – Isle of Skye and Raasay Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Figures as of 03/08/2025.

Name	Ward	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Ashaig	10	Closed	-	-	-
Cill Chrisod (Kilchrist)	10	Closed	-	-	-
Cille a'Bhealaich	10	Open	27	5.3	5.1
Culnacnoc	10	Closed	-	-	-
Dunvegan	10	Open	18	6.4	2.8
Dunvegan St Mary's	10	Closed	-	-	-
Edinbane	10	Open	126	2.3	54.3
Eynort	10	Closed	-	-	-
Fancyhill (Portree/The Lump)	10	Closed	-	-	-
Glendale	10	Open	154	3.4	45.8
Kilbeg	10	Open	184	6.2	29.9
Kilmaluag	10	Open	40	0.9	45.5
Kilmarie	10	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmartin/Staffin	10	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmore	10	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmuir	10	Open	143	2.2	63.8
Portnalong	10	Open	30	1.8	17.0
Portree	10	Open	10	18.9	0.5
Raasay Orchard Wood	10	Open	145	3.6	40.3
Raasay St Maol-Luag's	10	Closed	-	-	-
Rona	10	Closed	-	-	-
Sartle	10	Closed	-	-	-
Skeabost	10	Closed	-	-	-
St Columba's Isle	10	Closed	-	-	-
Strath (Broadford)	10	Open	65	11.0	5.9
Strathaird	10	Open	163	0.9	185.2
Struan New	10	Open	51	2.0	25.5
Struan Old	10	Closed	-	-	-
Trien	10	Open	112	4.8	23.3
Trumpan	10	Open	277	4.1	67.9
Uig	10	Open	184	5.8	31.9