

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8
Report No	LA/32/25

Committee: Lochaber Area

Date: 10 November 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 Lochaber area.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** the current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Lochaber 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 23 being within the Lochaber area. Of these, 12 are operational and 11 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 Lochaber 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 Four burial grounds within the Lochaber area, currently included in the capital programme, have less than ten years of remaining capacity:-
- Glen Nevis Burial Ground – works are ongoing to extend the existing burial ground. The site has been cleared of tree stumps, roots, bracken, etc. in preparation for drainage works to be carried out in winter 2025.
 - Kinlochmore Burial Ground – investigative works to find a new site for a replacement cemetery are ongoing. Trial digs are scheduled to be carried out on a potential new site later this year.
 - Morar Beoraid Burial Ground – adjacent land has been secured and fenced off for future extension.
- 6.5 The following projects have recently been completed within the Lochaber area and pictured in Appendix 2:-
- Duror Burial Ground – works to additional rows within the current cemetery boundary were completed earlier this year. Works added 140 additional lairs, equating to approximately 35 years capacity.
 - Blarour Burial Ground – construction works to utilise land within the existing cemetery boundary were completed in September 2025. This has added 130 additional lairs equating to approximately another 22 years capacity.
- 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: 3 October 2025

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Lochaber Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures
Appendix 2 – Recently Completed Works

Appendix 1 – Lochaber Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Figures as of 28/09/2025

Name	Ward	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Acharacle	21	Open	49	2.0	24.5
Anaheilt	21	Closed	-	-	-
Ardgour	21	Open	19	1.6	11.9
Arisaig	11	Closed	-	-	-
Blarour	11	Open	151	5.5	27.4
Bunavullin/Killunaig	21	Open	73	0.2	304.2
Drimnatorran	21	Open	43	2.2	19.9
Duror	21	Open	144	4.0	36.0
Fort William/The Craigs	21	Closed	-	-	-
Gairloch	11	Closed	-	-	-
Glen Nevis	21	Open	45	39.3	1.1
Invergarry	11	Open	46	1.0	44.2
Keil Ardgour	21	Closed	-	-	-
Keil Morvern (Lochaline)	21	Open	102	1.6	63.8
Kilchoan New	11	Open	56	1.2	46.7
Kilchoan Old	21	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmallie New	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmallie Old/Mid	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmonivaig	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmory	21	Closed	-	-	-
Kinlochmore	21	Open	15	6.6	2.3
Morar Beoraid	11	Open	33	6.9	4.8
Morar Old	11	Closed	-	-	-

Appendix 2 – Recently Completed Works

Duror Burial Ground – additional rows



Blarour Burial Ground – additional rows

