

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CIA/25/26

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** City of Inverness Area

**Date:** 18 May 2026

**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 progress of the cremator replacement project taking place at Inverness Crematorium and to update Members on the work being undertaken on burial ground capacity of new and/or extended burial grounds in the Inverness area.

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the progress of the cremator replacement project at Inverness Crematorium;
- ii. **Note** the progress of burial ground extensions in the Inverness area; and
- iii. **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 Cremator Replacement Project Update**

5.1 As previously reported to this committee, the replacement of equipment at Inverness Crematorium is necessary, driven by two key factors:-

1. The UK Government is introducing stricter emission standards for crematoria. Although initially proposed for implementation by January 2027, the updated guidance requiring both existing and new crematoria to adopt enhanced abatement technologies has progressed through Parliament. Despite delays, the new standards will come into force in December 2029.
2. Unfortunately, ATI, the manufacturer of the existing cremators ceased trading in 2020. While regular servicing and maintenance are currently carried out by external contractors, the absence of direct support from the original manufacturer introduces an increased risk to the long-term reliability and resilience of the cremation plant.

5.2 The proposed crematorium upgrade includes the installation of two FTIII SE cremators, both designed to accommodate bariatric coffins, ensuring accessibility for larger coffins. A double flue mercury and nitroxide abatement system will be integrated to meet environmental standards. The facility will also feature a new cremulator and ash transfer cabinet, alongside an air blast cooler with a heat exchange system that will contribute to heating the building.

Cold storage facilities will be added, providing capacity for up to six coffins. Additionally, a new control room will be constructed to support the upgraded operations. Refurbishment works will enhance the small chapel for direct cremations and small, intimate services, while the main chapel will see improvements to the catafalque area, including a new catafalque.

5.3 The replacement cremators supplier is Facultatieve Technologies Ltd. Morrison Construction has been appointed as the main contractor. Design development is complete with planning permission granted and building warrant approved.

- 5.4 The new extension is now wind and watertight, the first ATI cremator has been removed, and the first new FTIII cremator, along with a new stack, has been delivered and is currently being commissioned. It is expected to be fully operational by the beginning of June. Photos of the ongoing works can be seen within **Appendix 1**.

Construction works on the new extension, including refurbishment of the small chapel and improvements to the catafalque area in the main chapel, will continue throughout the summer months.

The second ATI cremator is scheduled for removal in September 2026. Installation of the second new FTIII cremator and associated abatement equipment will follow, with the system expected to be operational by November 2026. This will complete the cremator installation phase of the project.

- 5.5 During the refurbishment, there will be an impact on service delivery. Chapel service times will be reduced to three per day at 10:00, 11:00 and 12:00, with an increased number of direct cremation slots available. At certain stages of the project, overall capacity may be limited to five cremations per day. Information on the changes has been supplied to Funeral Directors and publicised.

## **6 Burial Ground Capacity Projects in the Inverness area**

- 6.1 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 39 being within the Inverness area. Of these, 25 are operational and 14 are closed. **Appendix 2** provides a breakdown of lair availability and capacity data for burial grounds in the Inverness area.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.

6.5 Six burial grounds within the Inverness area have less than 10 years current capacity; Kilvean, Kilmorack, Old Kiltarlity, Kirkhill (Wardlaw), Petty Tornagrain and Dores:-

- Kilvean Burial Ground – there is currently approximately 3.7 years of prepared lairs within the current phase of the site. Planning permission has been approved and drainage work completed for the next extension; this will increase capacity by approximately 10 further years. Further plans are being developed to utilise other areas of the burial ground, potentially adding 15-20 years additional capacity. Early investigations are also ongoing to identify and secure land for a future cemetery for the Inverness area as an eventual replacement for Kilvean Cemetery.
- Kilmorack Burial Ground – works to increase capacity within the existing cemetery boundary were undertaken in 2025, adding 84 additional lairs. Options for future lairs to be investigated.
- Kiltarlity Burial Ground – Although the current provision of prepared lairs offers an estimated 6.5 years of capacity, opportunities exist within the existing cemetery boundary to develop additional lairs. Further ground investigations will be required to establish the full extent of usable land.
- Kirkhill (Wardlaw) Burial Ground – Although the current provision of prepared lairs offers an estimated 5.3 years of remaining capacity, opportunities exist within the existing cemetery boundary to develop additional lairs. Further ground investigations will be required to confirm the full extent of usable land; however, it is anticipated that this could deliver in excess of 100 additional lairs, extending capacity by more than 30 years.
- Petty Tornagrain Burial Ground – 18 additional lairs were created within the burial ground in 2025 with options for further lairs within the present burial ground boundary under investigation.
- Dores Burial Ground – works to create a new extension are expected to begin in in summer 2026 with the cemetery project currently out for tender.

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: 23 April 2026

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Photos of Crematorium Project  
Appendix 2 – Inverness Area Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

**Appendix 1 – Photos of ongoing project at Inverness Crematorium**









## Appendix 2 – Inverness Area Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Figures as of 12/04/2026

Name	Ward	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Ardersier	17	Open	23	2.1	11.1
Auchterawe	12	Open	39	0.2	253.5
Beaully St Mary's	12	Open	296	1.3	226.4
Boleskine	12	Closed	-	-	-
Breaklish	17	Closed	-	-	-
Cannich	12	Open	44	1.0	44.0
Clachan Comar (Fasnakyle)	12	Closed	-	-	-
Corriemony	12	Closed	-	-	-
Croy	17	Open	100	1.7	59.1
Dalarossie	19	Open	23	1.2	19.9
Dalchreichart	12	Open	101	0.0	101.0+
Daviot	19	Open	533	3.6	147.4
Dores	12	Closed	-	-	-
Drumtemple	12	Open	80	0.7	115.6
Dunlichity	12	Closed	-	-	-
Eskadale St Mary's	12	Open	17	1.1	15.8
Foyers	12	Open	26	0.9	28.2
Glenconvinth	12	Open	54	1.5	36.9
Invermoriston	12	Open	94	0.4	244.4
Inverness Chapel Yard	14	Closed	-	-	-
Inverness Greyfriars	14	Closed	-	-	-
Inverness Old High	14	Closed	-	-	-
Jenkins Park	12	Open	93	1.6	57.6
Kilchuimen	12	Open	10	0.7	14.4
Kilmorack New/Old	12	Open	89	9.8	9.1
Kilmore New	12	Open	42	2.1	20.2
Kilmore Old	12	Open	27	1.3	20.6
Kiltarlity	12	Open	2	0.3	6.5
Kilvean	13	Open	455	123.5	3.7
Kirkhill (Wardlaw)	12	Open	17	3.2	5.3
Kirkton of Ardersier	17	Closed	-	-	-
Kirkton of Bunchrew	12	Closed	-	-	-
Lochend	12	Closed	-	-	-
Moy	19	Open	20	0.0	20.0+
Old Petty (Castle Stuart)	17	Closed	-	-	-
Petty Tornagrain	17	Open	38	8.8	4.3
Struy	12	Open	58	0.6	94.3
Tomnacross	12	Open	21	2.0	10.5
Tomnahurich	13	Closed	-	-	-