The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**7**
Report No	**LA/39/26**

Committee: **Lochaber**

Date: **9 November 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 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:-

- Land availability and purchase cost;
- Developmental 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 Three burial grounds within the Lochaber area, which are currently included in the capital programme, are projected to reach capacity within the next ten years:-

- Glen Nevis Burial Ground – Works to extend the existing burial ground are progressing. Site clearance, including the removal of tree stumps, roots and vegetation, has been completed, along with substantial drainage works. SEPA-level trial digs are to be undertaken this month and a planning application for the cemetery works will be submitted on receipt of the final dig report. Subject to approval, the cemetery works are expected to commence in early 2027.

- Kinlochmore Burial Ground – Investigative works to identify a suitable site for a replacement cemetery are ongoing. Trial digs have been completed at one potential location, and the final report is awaited.

- Morar Beoraid Burial Ground – Adjacent land to the existing burial ground has been secured and fenced off for future extension.

6.5 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:	14 October 2026
Author:	John MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager Rachel Robertson, Project Coordinator
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Lochaber Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Appendix 1 – Lochaber Burial Ground Capacities & Lair Figures

Figures as of 11/10/2026.

Name	Ward	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Acharacle	21	Open	48	1.9	24.9
Anaheilt	21	Closed	-	-	-
Ardgour	21	Open	19	1.6	11.7
Arisaig	11	Closed	-	-	-
Blarour	11	Open	156	5.5	28.5
Bunavullin/Killunaig	21	Open	73	0.2	328.5
Drimnatorran	21	Open	42	2.1	20.3
Duror	21	Open	144	3.7	38.9
Fort William/The Craigs	21	Closed	-	-	-
Gairlochy	11	Closed	-	-	-
Glen Nevis	21	Open	40	37.3	1.1
Invergarry	11	Open	44	1.1	52.5
Keil Ardgour	21	Closed	-	-	-
Keil Morvern (Lochaline)	21	Open	100	1.6	61.4
Kilchoan New	11	Open	54	1.3	42.9
Kilchoan Old	21	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmallie New	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmallie Old/Mid	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmonivaig	11	Closed	-	-	-
Kilmory	21	Closed	-	-	-
Kinlochmore	21	Open	11	6.4	1.7
Morar Beoraid	11	Open	29	6.7	4.4
Morar Old	11	Closed	-	-	-