

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8
Report No	SR/21/23

Committee: Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee

Date: 6 November 2023

Report Title: Bereavement Services – Project Updates

Report By: Executive Chief Officer – Communities and 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 Skye and Raasay area.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i. the progress of burial ground extensions in the Skye and Raasay area.
- ii. 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. Background

- 4.1 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 31 being in the Skye and Raasay area. Of these 16 are operational and 15 are closed. **Appendix 1** provides a breakdown of lair availability and capacity data for burial grounds in Skye & Raasay.

5. Burial Ground Capacity Projects in the Skye & Raasay area

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The Bereavement Services Project Board meets monthly, 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.
- 5.3 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) developments 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.
 - e) acceptability with local Planning considerations.
- 5.4 Progress on the current approved projects in Skye and Raasay is summarised in **Appendix 2**.
- 5.5 As can be seen, the projects are on track with a green RAG status. Good work has been undertaken by the bereavement services team, local amenities team, the project design unit, estates and legal to progress solutions with the support and input of local members.
- Strath (Broadford) is progressing well with a recent contract completed that will increase capacity on existing site by additional 84 lairs (approx. 7.5 years additional capacity). The purchase of land for the new extension is underway and should be completed by December.

- Portree is progressing with planning permission granted for the next phases 2A, 2B & 2C which will provide around 600 lairs. The final design and specification work is being undertaken. Work has recently been completed to increase capacity on existing site which has provided an additional 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity).
- The Dunvegan extension project is progressing with the design work to complete in November and planning application to be submitted by end of year. Works to allow additional capacity of approx. 2 years in existing burial ground are now complete.

5.6 In addition to the specific capital approved for 23/24, the team have been taking forward priority works through an approved £400k for bereavement services from the Health and Prosperity Strategy investment. This has been beneficial in taking forward additional projects in Skye and Raasay area as detailed in the table below. The balance of funding was £210k at April 2023 and the estimated outturn is a nil balance by March 2024.

Name	Area	Comments
Cill a'Bhealaich	Skye	Contract awarded to increase capacity on existing site - additional 38 lairs (approx. 6 years capacity) (£15k).
Portnalong	Skye	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed (budget estimate £20k)
Skeabost/Borve	Skye	Land available for site – investigations being undertaken (budget estimate £25k)
Portree	Skye	Works completed to provide additional capacity on existing site - 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity). (£6k)

5.7 **Appendix 3** provides photos of recently completed works at Strath and Portree.

5.8 Work is ongoing to review detailed projects for the current capital budget for 2024/25 - 2028/29 of £4.168m. For Skye and Raasay area this includes proposals for new burial ground in the Skeabost area and possible extension of Cill a'Bhealaich which is estimated to close in 2029. The bereavement services team will continue to engage with local members on projects in their area and their ongoing support is appreciated.

Designation: ECO Communities & Place

Date:

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Background Papers:

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

Figures as of 13/08/2023. Figures reported bi-monthly.

Name	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Ashaig	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Cill Chriosd (Kilchrist)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Cill a'Bhealaich	Open	1	5.0	0.2
Culnacnoc	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Dunvegan	Open	22	7.2	3.0
Dunvegan St Mary's	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Edinbane	Open	130	2.4	54.6
Eynort	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Fancyhill (Portree/The Lump)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Glendale	Open	160	3.4	46.7
Kilbeg	Open	196	6.2	31.7
Kilmaluag	Open	43	0.8	56.4
Kilmarie	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Kilmartin/Staffin	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Kilmore	Closed	Closed	0.3	Closed
Kilmuir	Open	147	2.3	64.3
Portnalong	Open	20	2.1	9.5
Portree	Open	19	19.2	1.0
Raasay Orchard Wood	Open	152	3.6	42.0
Raasay St Maol-Luag's	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Rona	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sartle	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Skeabost	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
St Columba's Isle	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Strath (Broadford)	Open	4	11.0	0.4
Strathaird	Open	166	0.8	217.9
Struan New	Open	53	2.2	24.2
Struan Old	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Trien	Open	121	4.9	24.9
Trumpan	Open	280	4.6	61.3
Uig	Open	195	5.8	33.6

Appendix 2 – Current approved capital projects

Name	2023/24 Capital Budget £000	Project status RAG	Date of estimated full capacity prior to any works	Works start date	Works duration (months)	site works to be completed	Estimated site settlement (months)	Go live date	comments
Strath (Broadford)	110	G	23/01/2024	27/02/2023	5	27/07/2023	6	23/01/2024	Contract completed to increase capacity on existing site - additional 84 lairs (approx. 7.5 years additional capacity). Land acquisition to secure land for next phase is concluding.
Portree	525	G	04/10/2024	09/11/2023	5	07/04/2024	6	04/10/2024	Work progressing for next phase - phases 2A, 2B & 2C = around 600 lairs. Contract completed to increase capacity on existing site - additional 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity).
Dunvegan	280	G	20/04/2025	25/05/2024	5	22/10/2024	6	20/04/2025	Works to allow for additional capacity of approx. 2 years in existing burial ground now complete. Land purchase for extension concluded. Design work to complete in November and planning application to be submitted by end of year.

Appendix 3 – Photos of recent projects

Portree Burial ground – new lairs in existing burial ground



Strath Cemetery (Broadford) – new lairs in existing burial ground

