

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CP/10/24

The Highland Council

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 22 May 2024

Report Title: Bereavement Services – Project Updates

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the Council's Bereavement Services capital projects to maintain burial ground capacity and crematorium services for the Highlands.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the progress of current projects on burial ground extensions and at Inverness Crematorium; and
- ii. **Note** future burial ground extension projects in Highland.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource:

The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for bereavement services, with budget of £2.931m for identified projects in 2024/25 and £3.068m for 2025/26 - 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. Energy use and ongoing compliance with emission standards are key factors in projects related to any changes to the cremation plant at Inverness Crematorium and appropriate technical advice will be taken for these 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. The Highland Council also operates Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness.
- 4.2 The table below details the number of cremations and burials undertaken in the last few years:

Year	No. Cremations	No. Burials	totals
2017	1127	1690	2817
2018	1240	1771	3011
2019	1237	1594	2831
2020	1239	1445	2684
2021	1264	1713	2977
2022	1403	1677	3080
2023	1387	1716	3103

5. Burial Ground Capacity Projects

- 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 As Members are aware, a project board is in place to support the work of the team delivering burial ground extensions and new sites. The board ensures good governance in delivering the programme and the remit has been expanded to include all bereavement services capital projects including:
- Projects to develop burial ground extensions and new burial ground sites.
 - Projects to maintain, develop and improve Inverness Crematorium.
 - Projects to maintain existing burial grounds including works related to the memorial safety programme.
 - Projects to support communities to maintain existing war memorials.

- 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:
- land availability and purchase cost.
 - developments 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.
 - acceptability with local Planning considerations.
- 5.4 Progress on the current approved projects is summarised in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.5 As can be seen, all projects are on track with a green RAG status apart from Glen Nevis, Lochaber. The Glen Nevis burial ground in Fort William is estimated to reach full capacity by the end of 2025. Significant work has been done locally with over 40 sites considered but, unfortunately, ground conditions are very challenging. Investigations are ongoing into two sites and local Members will continue to be updated on the position.
- 5.6 At Kilvean burial ground in Inverness, drainage works have been completed for the next extension. When complete this area will provide 1600 lairs, approximately another 10 years capacity. The PDU team are designing further improvements to the drainage at Kilvean which will allow a number of unused areas within the existing site to be utilised for future lairs. Long term planning for the Inverness area will require a new burial ground and initial land investigations are underway to identify a suitable site for this development.
- 5.7 In addition to the projects in Appendix 1, the team are progressing investigations and works at the following locations:

Name	Area	Comments
Portnalong	Skye (Ward 10)	Additional lairs to be created on existing site (budget estimate £5k).
St Duthus	Tain (Ward 7)	Land purchase for next extension phase ongoing (budget estimate £30k).
Skeabost/Borve	Skye (Ward 10)	Potential land available for site – investigations being undertaken (budget estimate £25k).
Duror	Lochaber (Ward 21)	Works planned for additional lairs on existing site – approx. 25+ years capacity (budget estimate £20k).
Croy	Inverness (Ward 17)	Works planned on existing extension to allow significant number of lairs to be available for sale with estimated 50+ years capacity (budget estimate £20k).

- 5.8 The following projects have been recently completed:
- Works to extend Proncynain Cemetery, Dornoch are fully complete, and the burial ground extension is now open for advance lair sales. The project added an additional 541 lairs / 50+ years capacity to the site.
 - Works to extend Daviot Cemetery, Inverness are fully complete, and the burial ground extension is now open for advance lair sales. The project added an additional 722 lairs / 50+ years capacity to the site.

- Works to improve existing lairs with strip foundations in Lochcarron Cemetery have now been completed by the Council's amenities team.
- Works to increase capacity within the existing Morefield Cemetery, Ullapool is now complete following works undertaken by the Council's amenities team.

5.9 Work is ongoing to review detailed projects for the capital budget for 2025/26 - 2028/29 of £3.068m. As shown in **Appendix 2**, there are 23 burial grounds that will require extensions or new sites to deliver service and business continuity. The bereavement services team will continue to engage with local Members on projects in their area.

6. Inverness Crematorium

6.1 Inverness Crematorium provides a full cremation service for the Highlands, with 1387 cremations conducted in 2023. The crematorium is inspected annually by Scottish Government inspectors and every 5 years by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

6.2 As Members are aware, a project group is taking forward the cremator replacement project which includes installation of new gas-fired cremators with associated abatement plant. The UK government has indicated that updated plant will be required by 2027 to meet tighter emission standards for crematorium. The aim is for works at Inverness crematorium to be undertaken in 2025 with phasing of the works to minimise any impact on the provision of cremations and services during the works. The Council on 14 September 2023 approved a capital budget for the Crematorium project of £1.2m with £50k allocated for 24/25 and £1.15m for 25/26.

6.3 A specialist consultant has been appointed to prepare the detailed feasibility report for the possibility of a crematorium in the Lochaber area.

6.4 Updates on both projects will be taken to this Committee in September 2024.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate

Date: 30 April 2024

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Current approved capital projects
Appendix 2 – Sites being reviewed for projects in next 10 years

Appendix 1 – Current approved capital projects

	Project status RAG	Date of estimated full capacity	Proposed works start date	Go live date	Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget 25/26-28/29 £000	Comments
Glen Nevis burial ground	R	31/08/2025	11/09/2023	31/08/2025	508		Site identification ongoing with 40+ sites around Fort William investigated. Two further sites being investigated.
Portree burial ground	G	31/01/2026	11/02/2024	31/01/2026	494		Tender to be progressed for next extension - phases 2A, 2B & 2C = around 600 lairs.
Petty-Tornagrain burial ground, Inverness	G	31/01/2025	04/08/2024	31/01/2025	40	40	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed - possibility of 60 additional lairs (approx. 2 years additional capacity). Land investigation underway for extension.
Mount Vernon burial ground, Thurso	G	31/08/2025	05/09/2024	31/08/2025	180		Land investigation/acquisition underway for new extension.
Canisbay burial ground	G	01/03/2026	07/09/2024	01/03/2026	215		New extension works expected to begin on site by end of May 2024.
Tomnacross burial ground, Kiltarlity	G	30/04/2025	01/11/2024	30/04/2025	30	90	Land acquisition ongoing. Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed.
Dunvegan burial ground, Skye	G	31/07/2026	07/05/2025	31/07/2026	274		Planning progressing for new extension on adjacent land including new car parking.
Tore burial ground, Black Isle	G	30/11/2025	03/06/2025	30/11/2025	23	95	Options for additional capacity on existing site being reviewed. Land investigation underway for extension.
Reay burial ground, Sutherland	G	30/11/2026	08/06/2025	30/11/2026	120	25	Land investigation/acquisition underway for new extension.
Alness burial ground	G	31/03/2027	07/10/2025	31/03/2027	350		Site acquisition progressing - Land negotiations ongoing. Design prepared - phase 1 to provide 240 lairs (approx. 24 years capacity).
Kinlochmore burial ground	G	31/12/2026	05/01/2026	31/12/2026	15	85	Land investigation underway for new extension.
Wick burial ground	G	30/09/2027	05/10/2026	30/09/2027	25	145	Land investigation underway for new extension.
Keiss burial ground	G	31/01/2028	05/02/2027	31/01/2028	22	55	Land investigation underway for new extension.

Kilvean burial ground	G	31/12/2028*	06/01/2028	31/12/2028	65	145	*Note 2028 date based on prepared lairs in current phase. Drainage works for new extension completed. PDU designing detailed layout for new extension and updated phasing plan is being prepared.
Kilmorack burial ground	G	31/01/2030	05/02/2029	31/01/2030	30	120	Land acquisition ongoing.
Broadford Strath burial ground, Skye	G	31/12/2030	07/10/2029	31/12/2030	54	90	Land purchased. Design work ongoing for future phasing.
Dores burial ground	G		-	-	303		Design work complete. Joint project for road work with Housing. Tender to be progressed.
Crematorium cremator replacement	G				50	1150	Project group taking forward design and tender specification.
War Memorials					19		-
Memorial Safety					39	20	-
Burial Grounds - General					75	1008	-
					2931	3068	

Appendix 2 – sites being reviewed for projects in next 10 years

Cemetery	Area	Estimated closed date
Blarour	Lochaber	Aug-27
Rosskeen	Ross & Cromarty	Jun-28
Abernethy	Badenoch & Strathspey	Jul-29
Portmahomack Tarbat	Ross & Cromarty	Jul-30
Kingussie New	Badenoch & Strathspey	Oct-30
Cille a'Bhealaich	Skye & Lochalsh	Nov-30
Strath (Broadford)	Skye & Lochalsh	Apr-31
Golspie New/Old	Sutherland	Jan-32
Urray West Church/Urray New	Ross & Cromarty	Apr-32
Lairg	Sutherland	Jun-32
Kirkhill (Wardlaw)	Inverness	Jul-32
Watten	Caithness	Aug-32
Laggantygown	Badenoch & Strathspey	Oct-32
Melness	Caithness	Jan-33
Halkirk	Caithness	Apr-33
Corsback	Caithness	May-33
Cawdor	Nairn	Feb-34
Kiltarlity	Inverness	Oct-34
Annat	Ross & Cromarty	Feb-35
Ardgour	Lochaber	May-35
Ardersier	Inverness	Feb-36
Arisaig	Lochaber	Closed
Inverness new	Inverness	-
