

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	11
Report No	SR/15/24

Committee: Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee

Date: 26 August 2024

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 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 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.

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) 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.
- 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.

- 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). We are currently awaiting final approval from Transport Scotland regarding access from the A87 trunk road.

- The Dunvegan extension project is progressing with the design work to completed. The planning application had been submitted and we await the outcome. Proposed works would allow for 528 lairs / 75+ years additional capacity. Minor works to allow additional capacity of approx. 2 years in existing burial ground are now complete.
- Strath (Broadford) is progressing well with works complete that increased capacity on existing site by additional 84 lairs (approx. 7.5 years additional capacity). Additional land has now been purchased and will allow for the future phases.

5.6 In addition to the specific approved capital, 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.

Name	Comments	Status
Cille a'Bhealaich	Contract awarded to increase capacity on existing site - additional 38 lairs (approx. 6 years capacity) (£15k).	Complete
Portnalong	Additional capacity available onsite – updated land surveys and mapping to be completed (budget estimate £5k).	Ongoing
Skeabost/Borve	Various land investigations being undertaken (budget estimate £5k).	Ongoing
Portree	Works completed to provide additional capacity on existing site - 26 single depth lairs (approx. 1.3 additional years capacity). (£6k)	Complete

5.7 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 a new burial ground in the Skeabost/Borve area and next phase of Cille a'Bhealaich. 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:

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Background Papers:

Appendices:

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

Figures as of 18/07/2024. Figures reported monthly.

Name	Status	Number of prepared lairs available	Average Lairs sold per year	Current capacity in years
Ashaig	Closed	Closed	0.7	Closed
Cill Chriosd (Kilchrist)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Cille a'Bhealaich	Open	35	5.0	6.9
Culnacnoc	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Dunvegan	Open	19	6.9	2.8
Dunvegan St Mary's	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Edinbane	Open	128	2.3	54.5
Eynort	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Fancyhill (Portree/The Lump)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Glendale	Open	156	3.5	44.9
Kilbeg	Open	190	6.2	30.8
Kilmaluag	Open	42	0.8	53.7
Kilmarie	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Kilmartin/Staffin	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Kilmore	Closed	Closed	0.3	Closed
Kilmuir	Open	146	2.2	67.2
Portnalong*	Open	0	1.9	0.0
Portree	Open	24	19.4	1.2
Raasay Orchard Wood	Open	150	3.5	43.1
Raasay St Maol-Luag's	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Rona	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sartle	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Skeabost	Closed	Closed	2.7	Closed
St Columba's Isle	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Strath (Broadford)	Open	79	10.8	7.3
Strathaird	Open	166	0.7	238.6
Struan New	Open	53	2.0	26.5
Struan Old	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Trien	Open	113	5.1	22.0
Trumpan	Open	278	4.3	63.9
Uig	Open	189	5.8	32.4

*note:- although Portnalong is noted to have 0 lairs, there are still lairs available – an updated mapping is awaited to provide an updated figure.

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
Portree	525	G	19/09/2025	01/09/2024	8	01/06/2025	4	01/09/2025	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	19/04/2027	01/01/2026	8	01/09/2026	6	01/03/2027	Works to allow for additional capacity of approx. 2 years in existing burial ground now complete. Land purchase for extension concluded. Planning permission submitted for extension works to allow for 528 lairs (75+ years capacity), awaiting outcome.
Strath (Broadford)	110	C	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	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 complete. Phasing plan in progress.