



Glasgow City Council

**Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy
Committee**

**Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhoods,
Regeneration and Sustainability**

Contact: Blair Wilson

Ext: 77068

Item 3

26th August 2025

Bereavement Services Update

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Committee with an update on NRS Bereavement Services.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee note the content of this report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NRS Bereavement Services has the responsibility for 33 cemeteries and churchyards of which 8 locations are in regular use. The service also manages two crematoria: Linn with 2 chapels and Daldowie which has 3.
- 1.2 Whilst the only statutory requirement in terms of bereavement services relates to the need for the Council to provide a burial ground, there is statutory legislation in place to govern the interment, cremation, and memorial headstone inspection processes.

2. Cremation Process

- 2.1 Glasgow City Council undertake an average of 5,500 cremations per year across Linn and Daldowie crematoriums.

2.2 Regulation/Governance of Crematoria

- 2.2.1 External Inspection – all Scottish crematoria are subject to an annual inspection by HM Senior Inspector of Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors. Our last inspection, in May 2024, concluded with the following overall assessment:

As has been the findings of previous inspections, no shortcomings were noted to any aspect of the cremation process with good practice noted throughout.

Daldowie Crematorium continues to carry out the highest number of cremations for any crematorium in Scotland, and it is with great credit to staff that they consistently manage to maintain and operate to the same high standards.

With the forthcoming closure of Linn Crematorium for a three month period, whilst extensive refurbishment is being carried out, contingency plans are in place to deal with any significant increase in demand at Daldowie during that period.

Overall the inspection found Daldowie Crematorium to be performing to a high level with staff continuing to provide a first-class service to the local community and beyond.

- 2.2.2 Environmental Inspection – in terms of Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (PPC Regs), each crematorium in Scotland is required to operate to a defined permit process. These regulations are governed by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and requires each Cremation Authority to provide emissions reports every six months. A further element of the PPC Regs requires each crematorium to carry out an independent 'stack' emissions test. This is done to support each crematorium's emissions reporting system and corroborate compliance standards. The required standards were met at both sites in 2024 with 2025 inspections expected in September 2025. As a result of a cyber attack, the annual inspections have not been carried out by SEPA since 2019. At this time of this report, no date has been set for a future inspection.

3. Burial Grounds Process

3.1 Glasgow City Council undertakes an average of 1,000 burials per year across our cemeteries.

3.2 Regulation/Governance of Cemeteries

3.2.1 Enacted in March 2016, the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 updated how burial and cremation are regulated across Scotland. This covers: management of burial grounds, burials application, registers, fees and lair rights, private burial, exhumation and treatment of pregnancy losses, duties of cremation authorities, powers of inspection of funeral directors, ability to respond to public health emergencies (e.g. pandemics) statutory codes of practice. However, key legislative additions have been introduced in 2025.

This includes:

3.2.2 Burial (Management) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 requires all burial authorities to: prepare and maintain a burial management plan, publicly accessible and reviewed annually, keep burial grounds in good order with permitted powers of memorials, equipment and landscaping, conduct scheduled safety inspections of memorials with public notification, train staff and keep written training and servicing records, optionally designate areas for specific faith of belief groups.

3.2.3 Burial and Cremation (Inspection) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 establishes a statutory inspection regime covering burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors.

3.2.4 The Funeral Director Code of Practice became legally binding on 1 March 2025 and applied to all funeral directors operating in Scotland regardless of base, and covers: care of the deceased (refrigeration at 4-7 degrees Celsius), identification and transfer procedures, handling of ashes and complaints, record-keeping, viewing facilities and staff competence.

3.2.5 GCC Bereavement Services is fully compliant with all aspects of the legislation and work closely with HM Inspector and other local authorities to share good practice via the Scottish Bereavement Benchmarking Group (SBBG).

4. Service Delivery – Cremation Refurbishment

4.1 Linn Crematorium closed in February 2025 for refurbishment works in line with the previous budget allocation provided by the Council.

4.1.1 The works included a new heating system with heat recovery from cremators, full rewire, asbestos removal, roof and façade repairs and internal decoration.

4.1.2 During this period of closure, families and funeral directors were encouraged to utilise the facilities available at Daldowie Crematoria with additional capacity provided. This resulted in an increase in the projected use at Daldowie during the three-month closure of Linn.

4.1.3 This work was fully completed in late April 2025 and the crematorium reopened in May 2025 and has been well received by families and funeral directors. It is hoped that this refurbishment will positively impact usage which has dropped approximately 20% over the last 6 years.

4.2. Cremation Equipment Maintenance

4.2.1 In early March 2023, Laplace Solutions was awarded a contract to provide maintenance and repairs to the cremation equipment at Linn and Daldowie for a period of 5 years. This maintenance is essential to ensure compliance with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the conditions of the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012. This contract has been successfully delivered during the last year, with Laplace currently finalising software upgrades at both crematoria.

4.3 Management Awareness and Response to Reduced Usage

4.3.1 NRS Management is aware of the recent reduction in usage and recognise that this may be partially attributed to the opening of new competitor sites nearby. Although due to the recent closure of Linn Crematorium to facilitate refurbishment works, accurate figures will not be available for some time. In response, and in addition to the refurbishment works now completed at both crematoria, a revised marketing strategy is currently under development, alongside the design of a new dedicated GCC Bereavement Services website. These efforts aim to modernise our service offering and will align with current industry standards, public expectations and increase public engagement.

5. Other Bereavement Services Issues

5.1 Unauthorised Memorials

5.1.1 The increase in the number of unauthorised memorials such as fences, rails, solar lights, etc, continues to be an issue in cemeteries and crematoria. The presence of these items can impede the grounds maintenance and, when these are no longer tended, can make the cemetery and crematoria grounds appear unduly untidy. The Management Rules are undergoing a review and officers have engaged with key stakeholders such as the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) to discuss solutions to these issues.

5.1.2 The removal and storage for collection of unauthorised memorials has begun in the Gardens of Remembrance in the grounds of Daldowie Crematorium. Currently, only memorials which appear unattended for a prolonged period, and new memorials, are being removed. Public notices advising visitors of this have been placed in and around the grounds.

5.1.3 A pilot implementation of a process to sensitively deal with unauthorised memorials within our cemeteries is due to begin in the coming months. This trial is in collaboration with our GCC Park Operations colleagues and in partnership with key stakeholders such as Glasgow Central Mosque. It is hoped the pilot

will not only assist in the review of the management rules but will also be an example to the general public in terms of the benefit from a grounds maintenance perspective, with standards of grass cutting, strimming and herbicide treatment all expected to considerably improve as a result. Once evaluated the pilot will be extended to other locations in due course.

5.2 Dogs in Crematoria and Cemeteries

5.2.1 Dog walking in GCC crematoria and cemeteries is permitted if dogs are retained on short lead (less than 2m) and that owners clean up any mess left by their dogs. In most cases owners follow these guidelines, however, a minority of dog owners and some commercial dog walkers choose to ignore the management rules. This can cause considerable distress to bereaved families.

5.2.2 Bereavement Services officers continue to work with our Community Enforcement colleagues to assess the scale of the issue pertaining to non-compliance by dog owners and will implement measures to reduce this should it be required. As part of this process, new signage has been introduced across our estate and our management rules are regularly reviewed. The possibility of further restrictions or the option of excluding dogs, other than support dogs, from our cemeteries and crematoria will also be considered.

6. Cemetery Capacity

6.1 Works to extend the capacity of the Linn Cemetery Extension, which incorporates the Islamic Burial Section, was completed in the late summer 2023 at a cost of £220k.

6.2 This phase provided an additional 700 lairs, of which there are approximately 500 remaining, an estimated capacity for another 3 to 4 years.

6.3 Plans to develop this site further are to be considered in autumn 2025.

6.4 An assessment of the total future capacity of all GCC cemeteries was completed in December 2024. This assessment concluded that there are 4,000 lairs available across the City, an estimated capacity for approximately 15 years.

6.5 In addition, Bereavement Services Management continue to meet on a regular basis with representatives from respective faith groups to ensure we effectively address specific service requirements.

7. Headstone/Memorial/Wall Inspections within Burial Grounds

7.1 The Memorial Inspection Programme, to assess the condition of all the memorial headstones within GCC cemeteries, continues to be carried out by staff. The process has now been further developed to include a more robust method of managing the safety of larger memorials, monuments, and structures as well as an assessment of all exterior and interior walls in and around our cemeteries.

- 7.2 Since 2015, all memorials in GCC cemeteries have been assessed and action taken, either to make safe or repair, where necessary. This programme ensures that over a five-year period every memorial in our cemeteries is inspected on at least one occasion. The process to carry out memorial inspections follows the Scottish Government guidance in the published Burial Ground Memorial Safety: Local Authority Guidance.
- 7.2.1 Our data indicates that of the programmed 48,940 inspections, 1,775 of these failed to meet the inspection standard and required immediate attention, just under 4%.
- 7.2.2 A further 5,000, around 10% were deemed to require a re-inspection within 12 months. This indicates that over 85% - 42,165 memorials do not require inspection for another 5 years.
- 7.3 In addition to conducting memorial inspections, Bereavement Services officers, with help from the GCC GIS Team have been continuing to 'plot' existing sites onto the GIS system. This groundwork will enable future inspections to be completed more efficiently and facilitate reporting functions not currently available.

8. Administration of Service

- 8.1 The administration processes involved with the delivery of our services continues to generate large volumes of paper and a review of the administration software package is being carried out and methods of reducing paper usage and extending the facility for on-line booking/recording are being considered as part of the delivery of a dedicated, front facing, GCC Bereavement Services webpage.

9. Training

9.1 SQA Courses

- 9.1.1 In conjunction with NRS Daldowie Training Centre, Linn and Daldowie Crematoria have been registered as a training centre for the delivery of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Introduction to the Principles of Cremation. This centre is also recognised to deliver the SQA Manage and Maintain Cemetery and Burial Ground Memorials. The Assistant Group Manager and the Bereavement Services Manager have gained the necessary accreditation from the SQA to deliver and assess these courses.

10. 2025-2026 Projects

10.1 Working for Freedom Programme

- 10.1.1 GCC is engaging with Scottish Prison Service (SPS) with a view to reintroducing the Working for Freedom programme which saw several long-term prisoners, coming towards the end of their sentences, working within GCC

cemeteries. This programme for 2 years was curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and worked alongside the Memorial Inspection Programme. While this initiative improved our cemeteries aesthetically and in terms of accessibility for grounds maintenance, it also provided added community benefit with prisoners gaining accredited training and qualifications and valuable work experience.

10.2 Memorial Mason Registration Initiative

10.2.1 As part of our continued review of service provision, and to assist with our ongoing headstone inspection regime, bereavement Services is currently evaluating the introduction of a Memorial Mason Registration scheme which would be applicable to all contractors wishing to install headstones within our estate. This would be in addition to the permit process currently in place and would ensure that the industry standards expected for installations by GCC are being followed by all contractors wishing to carry out works within our cemeteries.

10.3 Baby Memorial Garden

10.3.1 Bereavement Services, partnership with colleagues from the Landscape Design Team at Greenspace & Biodiversity, has secured £12k of Developer ENV2 funding to create a memorial garden in Lambhill Cemetery. The memorial garden will be situated at the common ground baby section and initial feasibility surveys have already taken place. Bereavement Services Management will initiate conversations with stakeholders before working on brief documents with the Landscape Design Team.

11. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: None.

Legal: None.

Personnel: None.

Procurement: None.

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 3: Fight the Climate Emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow. Mission 2: Become a net zero carbon city by 2030.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Generally supportive of the stated outcomes.

Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

Multi faith groups are supported and their needs and expectations met by service delivery.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

Services are available to financially excluded individuals via Public Health Burials and direct services.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Contributed to our energy and carbon masterplan and commitment to the Net Zero via heat renewables

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

None.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

None.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report :
No

12. Recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that Committee note the content of this report.