



Glasgow City Council

Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee

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Bereavement Services Update

Purpose of Report:

To provide 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 eight locations are in active use. The service also manages Linn and Daldowie crematoria.
- 1.2 Whilst the 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

- 2.1 Glasgow City Council undertake an average of 4,600 cremations per year across Linn and Daldowie crematoria.

2.2 Regulation/Governance of Crematoria

- 2.2.1 External Inspection – all Scottish crematoria are subject to periodic inspection by HM Senior Inspector of Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors. Our last inspection, in May 2024, concluded with the following overall assessment, with no further inspections scheduled at this time:

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.

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, 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 2025 with 2026 inspections expected in September 2026. SEPA has a right to inspect premises, with the last inspection in 2019. Regular engagement between SEPA and NRS Bereavement Services continues.

3. Burial Grounds

- 3.1 Glasgow City Council undertakes an average of 900 burials per year across our cemeteries.

3.2 Regulation and Governance of Bereavement Services

- 3.2.1 Enacted in March 2016, the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 updated how burial and cremation are regulated across Scotland. This includes 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 2026. These represent the most significant changes to burial and cremation legislation in Scotland in recent years and have required operational, administrative and policy changes:
- 3.2.2 These changes have required updates to local policies, procedures, documentation, record management arrangements, and staff training. The legislation will also play an important role in supporting the long-term sustainability of burial and cremation services across Glasgow. The new statutory requirements may also require future investment in modern digital record management systems and supporting technology to ensure continued legislative compliance and support the effective long-term management of burial and cremation records. Changes include:
- 3.2.3 Introduction of a 25-year initial right of burial** for all new lairs purchased from 1 March 2026, replacing the previous right in perpetuity. Rights may subsequently be renewed in 10-year increments and existing lairs purchased prior to this date are unaffected. The changes have required amendments to lair agreements, charging structures, and the creation and maintenance of statutory registers of burial rights. It is important to emphasise that these changes are not retrospective and do not affect existing lair holders, whose rights remain unchanged. It is important to emphasise that Lair rights may be extended in 10-year increments. There is the ability to renew indefinitely, ensuring families can retain lairs over the long term if they wish to do so.

While legislation permits renewal charges, any fee structure will be determined by the Council at a later date, closer to when the first renewals arise (around 2051). This will take account of factors such as funeral poverty, equality considerations, and long-term service sustainability.

Where a lair has not been used and the lease expires without renewal, the Council may reclaim ownership and make it available for resale or reuse. This approach is currently under consideration by Glasgow City Council.

The legislation allows, in the case of partially used lairs, their reuse for further burials without disturbing existing remains where rights have lapsed. However,

the Council has confirmed it has no plans to pursue this approach, particularly where it may conflict with arrangements agreed with faith groups.

- 3.2.4 **New Burial Management Regulations** requiring burial authorities to maintain formal management arrangements for cemeteries, including Burial Management Plans, operational procedures, contingency planning arrangements, memorial inspection programmes, equipment maintenance regimes and requirements relating to staff competency and training.
- 3.2.5 **Enhanced statutory record-keeping requirements**, including the maintenance of burial registers in perpetuity, retention of burial applications and supporting documentation for 50 years, and the maintenance of registers of burial rights.
- 3.2.6 **Changes to memorial rights**, which are now linked directly to the associated right of burial. Where a right of burial expires, the corresponding right to erect or maintain a memorial also expires unless the burial right is renewed.
- 3.2.7 **Legalisation of Hydrolysis (Water Cremation)** from 2 March 2026, making Scotland the first part of the United Kingdom to provide a statutory framework for this technology. Whilst no facilities are currently operational within Scotland, the legislation provides a framework for future provision.

Bereavement Services undertook an initial review, which concluded that, at the present time, there is insufficient data to support the introduction of alkaline hydrolysis within our service. Accordingly, Bereavement Services does not intend to progress the introduction of alkaline hydrolysis at this stage. However, the service continues to monitor developments within the sector.

- 3.2.8 **Introduction of updated statutory burial and cremation forms and registration requirements**, resulting in revised administrative processes for burial authorities, cremation authorities, and funeral directors.
- 3.2.9 **Further development of the legislative framework supporting future lair restoration and reuse**, including provisions relating to ownerless lairs and the long-term sustainable management of burial space.
- 3.2.10 Ensuring that families are fully informed has been a key priority. The Council has taken a proactive and transparent approach, including:
 - Direct communication with customers and elected members regarding the changes.
 - Engagement with faith groups, recognising the particular practices associated with burial.
 - Publication of updated information on the Council website, including FAQs to provide reassurance and clarity.
 - Clear messaging that the Council has no plans to implement measures in relation to existing lairs and burials, which has been central to public reassurance.

- 3.2.11 Glasgow City Council Bereavement Services continues to work closely with HM Inspector of Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors, neighbouring local authorities through the Scottish Bereavement Benchmarking Group (SBBG).

The service also engaged with professional organisations including the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) to share best practice, promote continuous improvement, and support the delivery of high-quality bereavement services.

4. Crematoria Service Delivery

- 4.1 Linn Crematorium Refurbishment. Linn Crematorium closed in February 2025 to facilitate a comprehensive programme of refurbishment works, in line with the capital investment previously approved by the Council. The investment was undertaken to modernise one of the Council's principal crematoria, improve operational resilience, enhance environmental sustainability and provide an improved experience for bereaved families, visitors and staff.

- 4.1.1 The refurbishment programme included the installation of a modern energy-efficient heat recovery system, full electrical rewire, asbestos removal, roof and façade repairs, together with extensive internal refurbishment and redecoration throughout the facility.

- 4.1.2 The refurbishment directly supports the ambitions set out within Glasgow City Council's Strategic Plan 2022–2027 by contributing to the Grand Challenge of tackling the climate emergency and delivering a just transition to a net zero Glasgow. Through the recovery and reuse of waste heat from the cremation process, the project significantly improves the energy efficiency of one of the Council's most energy-intensive operational buildings, reducing reliance on conventional heating systems, lowering the building's carbon footprint and supporting the Council's wider commitment to reducing emissions across its operational estate.

The investment also supports the Grand Challenge of enabling staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way by modernising critical infrastructure, improving operational resilience and providing a high-quality environment for the delivery of bereavement services. In addition, the heat recovery system is expected to reduce future operational revenue costs through lower energy demand, delivering long-term financial and environmental benefits while ensuring the Council continues to achieve Best Value from its investment in public assets.

- 4.1.3 During the refurbishment period, families and Funeral Directors were encouraged to utilise the facilities available at Daldowie Crematorium, where additional capacity was provided to accommodate the temporary increase in demand. This ensured continuity of cremation services across the city throughout the three-month closure, with minimal disruption to service delivery.

- 4.1.4 The refurbishment works were successfully completed in late April 2025 and Linn Crematorium reopened in May 2025. Feedback received from bereaved families, Funeral Directors and other service users has been overwhelmingly positive, with the upgraded facilities, improved internal environment and enhanced customer experience being particularly well received.

Bereavement Services will continue to work with Funeral Directors and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the significant investment made at Linn Crematorium and the enhanced facilities now available to families. Our communications will seek to ensure that families are fully informed of the choices available to them when arranging a funeral service, highlighting Linn Crematorium's modern, accessible facilities, improved customer environment and investment in sustainable infrastructure. This will help maximise the benefits of the Council's investment whilst supporting informed choice and maintaining high-quality bereavement services across the city.

- 4.1.5 In addition to extending the operational lifespan of one of the Council's principal crematoria, the refurbishment represents a significant long-term investment in the sustainability and resilience of Bereavement Services. It is anticipated that the enhanced facilities, improved customer experience and modernised infrastructure will contribute to increased customer satisfaction.

4.2. Cremation Equipment Maintenance

- 4.2.1 In March 2023, following a procurement exercise, a maintenance and repair contract was awarded for 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, with software upgrades completed at both crematoria.

5. Other Bereavement Services Matters

5.1 Unauthorised Memorials

- 5.1.1 The increasing number of unauthorised memorial items, including fences, railings, solar lights and other personal tributes, continues to require sensitive and proportionate management across the Council's cemeteries and crematoria. Bereaved families may understandably hold differing views regarding the types of memorials and personal items they consider appropriate to commemorate their loved ones. However, where such items are installed out with the Council's Management Rules, they can impede grounds maintenance, have health and safety considerations, and, where no longer maintained, detract from the overall appearance and dignity of the cemetery and crematorium environment.

Officers have engaged with sector partners, including the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and the Scottish Bereavement Benchmarking

Group (SBBG), to consider good practice and explore proportionate, sensitive and consistent approaches to managing these issues.

- 5.1.2 Since March 2024, arrangements have been made for unauthorised memorials to be removed from the grounds of Daldowie Crematorium, and stored for collection. Public notices advising visitors of this have been placed in and around the grounds.
- 5.1.3 We are now extending this approach to sections of Linn Cemetery and Cardonald Cemetery. The approach has been developed in collaboration with colleagues in Parks Operations and in consultation with key stakeholders, including faith groups, to ensure that operational requirements are balanced with the needs and expectations of bereaved families.

This approach also expected to demonstrate the operational benefits of maintaining clear access for routine grounds maintenance activities, enabling improvements to grass cutting, strimming and weed management, while enhancing the overall appearance, safety and dignity of these cemetery sections. The outcomes of the pilot will be evaluated before consideration is given to extending the approach to other appropriate locations across the Bereavement Services estate.

6. Cemetery Capacity

- 6.1 An assessment of future city-wide burial capacity was undertaken in March 2026. The assessment concluded that Glasgow City Council's cemeteries have an estimated remaining burial capacity of approximately 10 years across the city, based on current usage levels and available lair provision. Bereavement Services will continue to monitor capacity and progress phased cemetery development works to ensure sufficient provision is maintained to meet future demand.
- 6.2 Bereavement Services will continue to develop proposals to bring into use areas of land already designated for burial purposes within Lambhill Cemetery and Linn Cemetery Extension. It is anticipated that the development will continue to support future service demand and contributing to the sustainable delivery of bereavement services across Glasgow.
- 6.3 As part of its long-term strategic planning and burial capacity programme, a site in the south of the city is included within the City Development Plan 2 (CDP2) taken to [Committee Administration Committee 4th June 2026](#) process to identify a portion of land adjacent to Linn Cemetery for potential future cemetery development. A representation period will take place between 21 August and 18 November 2026 and at that point the Council will welcome comments on CDP2. The proposal is at a very early stage and remains subject to a range of statutory planning, environmental and regulatory assessments, including any necessary approvals from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), together with the Council's wider governance and decision-making processes.

If progressed, the site has the potential to provide additional burial capacity for the city, supporting the long-term sustainability and resilience of Glasgow's bereavement services. The proposal also presents opportunities to contribute to wider Council priorities, including sustainable water management, climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement and the provision of high-quality multifunctional greenspace, ensuring that any future development delivers both operational and environmental benefits.

- 6.4 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. 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 includes managing the safety of larger memorials, monuments, trees and structures as well as an assessment of walls in and around our cemeteries. Responsibility for the safety of the burial ground, as a whole, sits with this service, with ownership of individual headstone, and responsibility for any repair, sitting with the lair owner.
- 7.2 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 15,238 memorial inspections programmed during the reporting period, 1,082 failed to meet the required inspection standard and required immediate action to make them safe. This represents just over 7% of all programmed inspections, demonstrating that the vast majority of memorials inspected were found to be in a satisfactory condition. The findings also reinforce the importance of maintaining a robust, risk-based programme of regular inspections, enabling potentially unsafe memorials to be identified and appropriate remedial action taken before they present a greater risk to public safety.
- 7.2.2 A further 2,651 memorials, representing just over 17% of those inspected, were identified as requiring re-inspection within 12 months due to signs of deterioration that did not warrant immediate remedial action. This indicates that approximately 75% of all inspected memorials were found to be in at least satisfactory condition and will not require further inspection until the next scheduled five-year inspection cycle. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of the Council's risk-based inspection programme in targeting resources where they are most needed while maintaining the safety of visitors across the Bereavement Services estate. Where lairs are found to require remedial action, the service endeavours to contact lair owners to make them aware of action they can take, before the service take action.

- 7.3 In addition to conducting memorial inspections, the service continue to work with colleagues to add to the functionality of digital inspection tools. This groundwork will enable future inspections to be completed more efficiently and facilitate reporting functions not currently available.
- 7.4 In addition to the routine physical inspection of memorials, larger memorials, monuments and structures exceeding 2.5 meters in height are included within the inspection programme. In accordance with current industry guidance and health and safety considerations, these structures are subject to detailed visual inspections only and are not physically tested. While this approach provides an appropriate assessment of their general condition, Bereavement Services recognises the importance of ensuring that these significant assets continue to be managed effectively. Accordingly, the service is currently exploring options to develop a more robust inspection regime for larger memorials, including the potential appointment of specialist contractors to undertake periodic inspections where appropriate. This work will further strengthen public safety while supporting the long-term preservation of these important heritage assets.
- 7.5 Bereavement Services operates an inspection programme for all retaining, boundary and internal cemetery walls across the estate. Inspections are undertaken on a two-year rolling cycle by competent, trained officers to identify any defects or deterioration that may present a risk to public safety or the integrity of the asset. Where defects are identified, appropriate preventative maintenance and repair works are programmed and prioritised according to the level of risk, ensuring that available resources are directed to those locations requiring the most urgent attention. This proactive approach supports the Council's wider asset management responsibilities while helping to maintain safe, accessible and well-presented cemetery environments.
- 7.6 In addition to the health of the tree itself, trees, whether self-seeded or otherwise, will be assessed for the proximity to headstones and boundary walls, and the associated risk that their future growth may pose, and appropriate action then taken.

8. Administration of Service

- 8.1 The Council's Cemetery Management Rules are currently under officer review, informed by ongoing pilot initiatives, stakeholder engagement and changes in legislation, to ensure they continue to support the safe, dignified and effective management of the Council's cemeteries. Any amendments to, or additions within, the Management Rules will be subject to public consultation through the Council's Consultation Hub before being reported to the relevant Committee for consideration and approval. This approach will ensure that stakeholders, service users and members of the public have an opportunity to comment on proposed changes before any formal decisions are taken by the Council. It is anticipated that the Council's Cemetery Management Rules will be updated during the 2027/28 financial year.

8.2 Introduction of Non-Resident Burial Charges.

In April 2026, Bereavement Services introduced revised charging arrangements for the purchase of lairs and interments, including the introduction of non-resident charges. The revised charging structure forms part of the Council's wider approach to ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of burial services, while supporting the ongoing investment required to maintain, develop and enhance Glasgow's cemeteries.

The introduction of non-resident charges aligns Glasgow City Council with the approach already adopted by 16 other Scottish local authorities, including five of the other seven Glasgow City Region councils. The revised charging structure therefore brings Glasgow into line with established practice across much of Scotland.

The application of non-resident charges reflects a fair and equitable approach that is consistent with that adopted by neighbouring authorities, where Glasgow residents are similarly required to pay non-resident charges when accessing burial services outwith the city.

The introduction of the revised charges followed benchmarking against other Scottish local authorities and was supported by an Equality Impact Assessment to consider the potential impacts of the proposed changes. Bereavement Services will continue to monitor the implementation and impact of the revised charging structure to ensure it remains appropriate, proportionate and supports the sustainable delivery of high-quality bereavement services for the people of Glasgow.

9. 2026-2027 Projects

9.1 Memorial Mason Registration Scheme

- 9.1.2 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.

9.2 Baby Memorial Garden

- 9.2.1 Glasgow City Council provides a number of baby burial and remembrance areas across its cemetery estate, recognising the importance of offering peaceful and dignified spaces for reflection.

Funding has been secured to create a memorial garden at the Common Ground Baby Section within Lambhill Cemetery. Initial feasibility surveys have been

completed and Bereavement Services will now engage with bereaved families and other key stakeholders to help inform the design and scope of the project.

The proposed memorial garden at Lambhill Cemetery will complement this existing provision by creating an enhanced environment specifically designed to support bereaved families and provide an inclusive place for remembrance. The project reflects the Council's continued commitment to improving bereavement services and responding sensitively to the needs of families experiencing baby loss.

9.3 Daldowie Crematorium River Clyde Pier

- 9.3.1 Following engagement with a number of faith groups, and statutory bodies, Bereavement Services has designed an ashes lowering device for use at the Daldowie Crematorium River Clyde Pier. The purpose-built device has been developed to provide a safe, and dignified method of lowering cremated remains into the River Clyde, recognising the cultural and religious significance of this form of committal for a number of families and communities.

Operational testing and evaluation has been undertaken to ensure the equipment operates effectively in varying weather conditions, river conditions and operational demands before entering routine service. The device will become operational later this year enhancing the range of bereavement services available and demonstrating the Council's ongoing commitment to inclusivity, service innovation and meeting the needs of Glasgow's communities.

9.4 Cemetery Footpath Funding

- 9.4.1 The Council has approved £1.5 million of capital investment to enhance footpaths and associated infrastructure across the Bereavement Services estate. This significant investment has been prioritised based on operational need, asset condition and customer impact, ensuring that resources are directed to those locations where they will deliver the greatest benefit.

The programme includes works at Linn and Daldowie Crematoria, Riddrie Park Cemetery, Linn Cemetery, Linn Cemetery Extension, Sighthill Cemetery, the Eastern Necropolis and the Western Necropolis. These improvements will enhance accessibility, improve safety and support the overall visitor experience for bereaved families, whilst strengthening the long-term resilience and maintainability of the Council's burial and cremation infrastructure.

This investment forms part of the Council's ongoing asset management programme and demonstrates its commitment to maintaining safe, accessible and dignified environments for bereaved families. The programme is proposed to be delivered over six phases, providing a structured and efficient approach to implementation whilst minimising operational disruption.

Contract documentation for Phase 1 is currently being prepared with procurement planned for September 2026, with a view to the successful contractor being able to propose a works programme later this financial year.

10. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: Funding for measures is included within existing approvals

Legal: The report notes details of legislative measures brought into force this year

Personnel: No personnel implications

Procurement: Procurement for works stated within the report will be procured using existing Frameworks

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 3
Mission 2: Become a net zero carbon city by 2030.

Grand Challenge 4
Mission 2: Run an open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29? Please specify.

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

Report details engagement with faith communities in relation to our services

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

Climate Impacts:

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

The proposals support the following themes and actions

Measures included in this report will deliver improved building conditions

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

Report notes measures to reduce carbon footprint of our estate

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

Yes

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

No

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report

11. Recommendations

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