
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	3 May 2018
Report By:	Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services	Report No:	ERC/ENV/WR/17.330
Contact Officer:	Willie Rennie	Contact No:	714761
Subject:	Cemetery Development Update		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress as regards Cemetery Development in Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The provision of burial lairs is a statutory obligation on local authorities therefore Inverclyde Council is required to continue to provide burial lairs to meet this obligation. There is sufficient burial lair capacity in Knocknairshill Cemetery to meet demand for approximately 4.5 years. Knocknairshill is the only cemetery in Inverclyde which has new lairs available and this has been the case since 1994.
- 2.2 Previous reports to the Committee advised that unsuitable ground conditions prevented the expansion of Knocknairshill, Greenock, Gourrock and Port Glasgow Cemeteries. Officers are now revisiting the possibility of some expansion of Knocknairshill and Port Glasgow Cemeteries, this due to updated guidance issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) which may offer some scope for the development of both cemeteries.
- 2.3 Officers are currently in discussion with SEPA about the possibility of expansion at Knocknairshill Cemetery; the potential for groundwater contamination was the reason why the site was initially considered unsuitable for expansion. Information and data from site investigations and surveys previously carried out are being considered by SEPA at present and the discussion that is taking place is about what action may be taken to mitigate the risk of groundwater contamination.
- 2.4 Further site investigations are planned for a small area adjacent to Port Glasgow Cemetery and High Carnegie Road. Before intrusive investigations can take place an ecological survey has to be carried out, said survey is underway at present.
- 2.5 Land adjacent to both Inverkip and Kilmacolm Cemeteries may be suitable for cemetery expansion; however, it has been confirmed that Inverclyde Council does not own the land in question. Preliminary discussions are ongoing with the relevant landowners.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee approve that expansion of Knocknairshill and Port Glasgow Cemeteries be further investigated and progressed in the manner set out in this report.

Willie Rennie
Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The provision of burial lairs is a statutory obligation on local authorities hence Inverclyde Council is required to continue to provide burial lairs to meet this obligation. Each local authority must provide one burial ground within the area of the local authority and may provide other burial grounds within that area.

4.2 There are six local authority managed cemeteries within Inverclyde in which burials take place:-

Inverkip	Gourock	Greenock
Knocknairshill	Port Glasgow	Kilmacolm

4.3 Not all land is suitable for development as a cemetery. There are practical considerations such as the presence of rock, the steepness of the site, nearby water courses etc.; and there is a main consideration as regards the potential of pollutants to affect the water environment, groundwater in particular. There are also financial matters for consideration, notably whether land is owned or has to be purchased.

5.0 CURRENT SITUATION

5.1 Knocknairshill Cemetery

Knocknairshill is the only cemetery in Inverclyde which has new lairs available and this has been the case since 1994. There is sufficient burial lair capacity in Knocknairshill Cemetery to meet demand for approximately 4.5 years – to 2021. The estimate of lair capacity is indicative, it is based on recent usage patterns and the number of lairs available for immediate use. Officers are currently in discussion with SEPA about the possibility of expansion at Knocknairshill Cemetery; the potential for groundwater contamination was the reason why the site was initially considered unsuitable for expansion. Information and data from site investigations and surveys previously carried out are being considered by SEPA at present and the discussion that is taking place is about what action may be taken to mitigate the risk of groundwater contamination.

5.2 Port Glasgow Cemetery

Port Glasgow Cemetery has no new lairs available for sale and this has been the case for a number of years. Surveys to date concluded that the adjacent land is unsuitable for development as a cemetery. However, as with Knocknairshill Cemetery, officers are revisiting this site to ascertain if there is any scope to mitigate the risk of groundwater contamination. Further site investigations are planned for a small area adjacent to Port Glasgow Cemetery and High Carnegie Road. Before intrusive investigations can take place an ecological survey has to be carried out, said survey is underway at present.

5.3 Knocknairshill and Port Glasgow Cemeteries Potential Expansion

It remains the intention that up to 3 coffins be interred in each lair, this has been the convention in local cemeteries in the past. As is the case at present, the capability to inter 3 coffins is dependent on the ground conditions discovered following the initial opening of the lair. Although not being proposed at the moment, an obvious mitigation to deal with rock or the risk of groundwater contamination is to reduce the depth of a lair, which could mean the number of coffins interred in a lair being revised from 3 to 2. It is also current practice that up to 6 cremated remains caskets may also be interred in a lair, therefore a standard lair has capacity to accommodate 3 coffins and 6 cremated remains caskets.

In terms of The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, it is intended that regulations will be made to specify the depth at which human remains may be buried. Said regulations have not yet been made, hence standard practice across burial authorities varies at present.

Kilmacolm and Inverkip Cemeteries

As previously reported to committee in August 2017, land adjacent to both of these cemeteries may be suitable for cemetery expansion; however, Inverclyde Council does not own the land in question. Officers continue to engage with the relevant landowners about the possibility of the land being acquired for cemetery expansion in the near future. At the time of writing discussions are ongoing.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

6.1 Financial Implications

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend £'000	Comments
Capital	Cemetery Development	2018/20	1,500	For noting only as this cost has already been approved by committee 12 January 2017.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Revenue		2018/20			These costs will be included in a future report to committee.

6.2 Legal

In terms of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, Inverclyde Council has duties and powers in connection with the provision of burial grounds and lairs within its area. There are no other specific legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no human resources issues arising from this report.

6.4 Equalities

There are no equality issues arising from this report.

6.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation issues arising from this report.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 Legal and Property Services is being consulted as regards the estimated scope and cost of the potential works.

7.2 SEPA is being consulted on environmental issues associated with cemetery development.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

SEPA Land Use Planning System GU32 version 4, 05/07/2017: Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Cemeteries on Groundwater.