
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	1 September 2016
Report By:	Head of Environmental & Commercial Services	Report No:	ERC/ENV/RG/16.286
Contact Officer:	Willie Rennie	Contact No:	714761
Subject:	Cemetery Development		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise that a feasibility study into the further expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery, Greenock has been concluded with the outcome being that it will not be possible to extend the cemetery further. In the circumstances, a feasibility study into the potential to extend Greenock Cemetery is now underway and other possible sites are also being explored.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Burial of the dead is a statutory obligation on local authorities. There are six local authority managed cemeteries within Inverclyde in which burials take place. Since 1994, only Knocknairshill Cemetery has had new lairs available for use. As of the early 1990s, it has been Inverclyde Council's policy to expand and develop one cemetery only, Knocknairshill.
- 2.2 The original masterplan for the development of Knocknairshill Cemetery was drafted in the early 1990s and was completed in 2012. Knocknairshill Cemetery has 3,400 coffin lairs in total. Based on the number of remaining lairs and current rate of use, Knocknairshill has sufficient capacity to meet demand for the interment of coffins and cremated remains caskets for 5 years.
- 2.3 Inverclyde Council has a policy that burial lairs can only be purchased immediately following bereavement. At the time of bereavement, the options for the family are to purchase a single lair or two adjacent lairs; it is important to note that the capacity to meet demand for the stated 5 year period is contingent on this policy remaining in place.
- 2.4 A feasibility study into a next phase of expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery has confirmed that the cemetery cannot be further expanded, this is due to a higher than anticipated water table. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has produced guidance on assessing the impacts of cemeteries on groundwater contamination and it is clear that the high water table on the site means that the depth required for burial lairs could not be achieved without the risk of contaminating groundwater.

Given that expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery is not an option, in order to secure burial capacity beyond 2021, the next phase of development of a replacement cemetery for Inverclyde requires to be progressed.

- 2.5 Expansion of an existing cemetery or cemeteries on land already owned by Inverclyde Council is the preferred option. However, not all land is suitable for development as a cemetery, so other prospective sites will also be considered as to their suitability.

2.6 The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 28 April 2016. There remains a duty for local authorities to provide burial lairs.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

- 3.1 the Committee note that it is not feasible to further expand Knocknairshill Cemetery and that a site investigation is now underway to assess whether it is feasible to expand Greenock Cemetery onto vacant, adjacent land in upper Bow Farm;
- 3.2 subject to a positive outcome of the upper Bow Farm site investigation, the Committee approve that further assessments be carried out to study the potential impact of a cemetery extension on groundwater;
- 3.3 subject to the outcome of the assessment of a cemetery expansion on groundwater, the Committee approves a further report being brought forward as to the feasibility of an extension of Greenock Cemetery; and
- 3.4 the Committee approves other possible sites for cemetery development being explored and a further report being brought forward to include details of the sites.

Robert Graham
Head of Environmental & Commercial Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Burial of the dead is a statutory obligation on local authorities. There are six local authority managed cemeteries within Inverclyde in which burials take place.

Inverkip	Gourock	Greenock
Knocknairshill	Port Glasgow	Kilmacolm

Knocknairshill is the only cemetery in Inverclyde which has new lairs available and this has been the case since 1994.

Based on current usage, 280 coffin interments are carried out in Inverclyde per annum, of which 98 are in new lairs (Knocknairshill Cemetery) and 182 in re-opened lairs (all cemeteries). Each lair can usually take up to 3 coffins, and 6 cremated remains caskets.

- 4.2 In addition to providing dual use lairs for the interment of coffins and caskets, separate, much shallower lairs are also provided for the interment of cremated remains caskets only. On average, 205 cremated remains interments are carried out per annum in casket only lairs, of which 17 are in new lairs in Knocknairshill Cemetery. Based on current usage, there is sufficient capacity for a further 5 years in respect of new casket only lairs.

Cremated remains caskets may be interred in specially designated areas of cemeteries, referred to as gardens of remembrance, or in new cremated remains lairs that are located at various sites elsewhere in a cemetery, or in a family lair that also accommodates 3 coffins. Typically, gardens of remembrance and new cremated remains lairs are situated on cemetery land that is not suitable for the interment of coffins, because of underlying rock or some similar unsuitable ground condition.

- 4.3 The first phase of cemetery development at Knocknairshill commenced in the early 1990s and the final phase, phase 5, was completed in 2012. Knocknairshill Cemetery now has 3,400 coffin lairs in total. Based on the number of remaining lairs and current rate of use, Knocknairshill has sufficient capacity to meet demand for new dual coffin and casket lairs for 5 years.
- 4.4 Inverclyde Council has a policy that burial lairs can only be purchased immediately following bereavement. At the time of bereavement, the options for the family are to purchase a single lair or two adjacent lairs. The policy of only selling one adjacent lair for future use is intended to allow some scope for families to plan for future bereavements and also to ensure that there are still burial lairs available in the short and medium term - it is important to note that current rates of usage are contingent on this policy remaining in place.
- 4.5 A feasibility study into a next phase of expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery has confirmed that the cemetery cannot be further expanded due to a higher than anticipated water table, which means that the depth required for burial lairs could not be achieved without the risk of digging too near to the water table and contaminating groundwater. SEPA sets out in detail a range of criteria which a cemetery development site should meet in order that the risk of groundwater contamination is negated or minimised. The expansion site fails key criteria which cannot be mitigated, in particular, that coffins would be within 1m of the water table and would therefore contaminate groundwater. Given that expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery is not an option, in order to secure burial capacity beyond 2021, the next phase of development of a replacement cemetery for Inverclyde requires to be progressed now.

Expansion of an existing cemetery or cemeteries on land already owned by Inverclyde Council is the preferred option. This approach will be less expensive and have the added advantage of having a large part of the required infrastructure already in place. However, 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.

- 4.6 Although the undernoted fees are not directly relevant to burial lair capacity, they are noted here for information.

Relevant Fees April 2016 to March 2017

Purchase coffin lair (up to 3 coffins+ 6 caskets)	£502.50
Purchase cremation casket lair (6 caskets)	£253.00

4.7 Key Statistics

Burials per annum (average) all cemeteries	
New lairs only	98 (a)
Re-opened lairs only	182 (b)
Burials per annum	280 (a) + (b)
Lair usage per annum (average) Knocknairshill Cemetery	
For immediate use	98 (c)
For future use	15 (d)
Requirement	113 (c) + (d)
Available	600
Remaining capacity	5 years (Available/Requirement)

5.0 CURRENT SITUATION

- 5.1 The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has produced guidance on assessing the impacts of cemeteries on groundwater. The SEPA guidance was applied in the case of Knocknairshill Cemetery and it was determined that the site was not suitable for expansion. The same process is now being applied to the Inverclyde Council owned land adjacent to Greenock Cemetery (upper Bow Farm), please see appendix 1. A large number of housing units previously occupied the site, including high rise flats, all of which were demolished several years ago.
- 5.2 SEPA guidance aims to assist developers and local authorities in assessing potential sites and informing best site design to negate or minimise the risk of pollution to groundwater. A phased methodology for site assessment is outlined, which is proportionate to the level of risk and the outputs of which can be used to inform Planning decisions. Under the guidance, a stage 1 assessment is required to facilitate the feasibility of developing a site for use as a cemetery. It should be noted that subject to the outcome of the stage 1 assessment, a stage 2 assessment could be required. The upper Bow Farm site is of a size, >0.5ha, which is a risk factor considered in a stage 1 assessment and which triggers the need do a stage 2 assessment. This is of particular importance as a stage 2 assessment will require a period of investigation and monitoring over at least one seasonal cycle (12 months).
- 5.3 It is recommended by SEPA that professionals with demonstrable qualifications and experience in groundwater risk assessments be engaged in the design of cemeteries that require stage 2 or stage 3 assessments. In consideration of the requirements of even a stage 1 assessment, suitably qualified professionals will be engaged to conduct the stage 1 assessment.

5.4 In addition to the assessments required under the SEPA guidance, the site is also being assessed as to its suitability in practical terms. Some trial pits have been excavated to try to identify areas which may not be suitable as burial lairs. To date, some of the excavations have exposed rock formations close to the surface, while in other parts of the site the requisite depth necessary for lairs to permit the interment of three coffins was achieved. A more comprehensive site investigation (SI) has been instructed to identify and record the makeup of the terrain. The results of the SI will inform the decision as to whether or not, for practical purposes, the site is suitable for development as a cemetery. Thereafter, if the site is suitable, a stage 1 and 2 SEPA assessment will be instructed – because the proposed site is larger than 0.5ha, a stage 2 assessment is required.

6.0 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 A site investigation to be carried out on the upper Bow Farm land and, if the results are favourable, to proceed with SEPA stage 1 and stage 2 assessments. A further report to be brought forward thereafter with recommendations as to the feasibility of developing the upper Bow Farm site as an extension of Greenock Cemetery.
- 6.2 Other possible sites for cemetery development will be explored and a further report be brought forward to include details of the sites.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

7.1 Financial Implications

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend £'000	Comments
Capital	Cemetery Development; & Feasibility Studies	2016/17	30	Preliminary Site Investigation & SEPA stage 1 & 2 assessments upper Bow Farm. Preliminary Site Investigation potential other sites.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

7.2 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. The Council owns the land adjacent to the existing cemetery which is necessary for the proposed extension. There are no other specific legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Human Resources

There are no human resources issues arising from this report.

7.4 Equalities

There are no equality issues arising from this report.

7.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation issues arising from this report.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

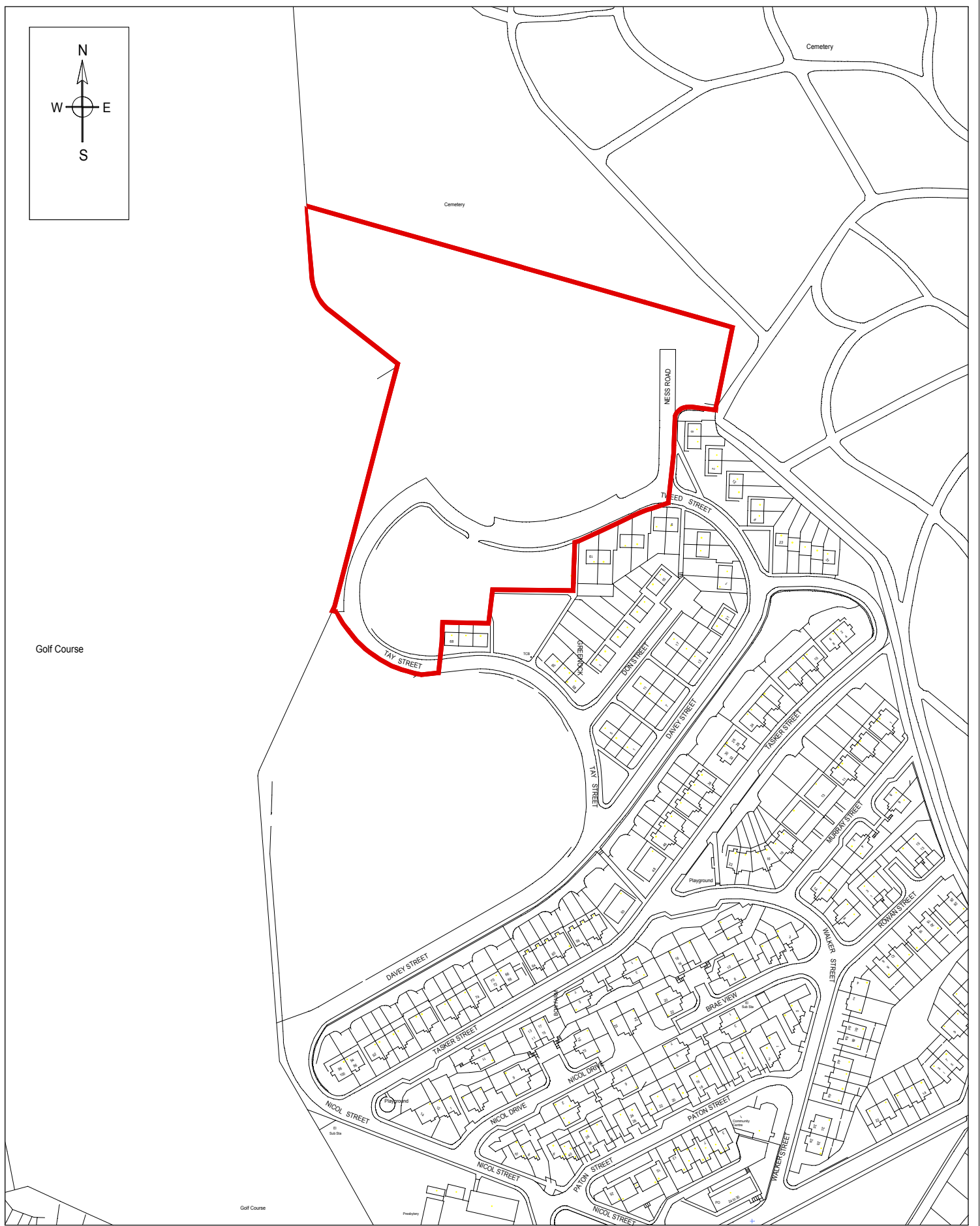
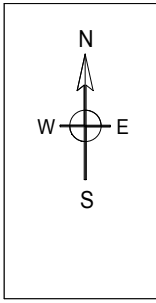
8.1 Planning was consulted as regards the use of the upper Bow Farm site, the SEPA assessments will be a key consideration in the Planning process.

8.2 Legal and Property Services was consulted as regards the estimated scope and cost of the proposed works.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

SEPA Land Use Planning System GU32 version 3, 24/09/2015: Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Cemeteries on Groundwater.



APPENDIX 1

Land at Upper Bow, Greenock

**THIS PLAN IS
INDICATIVE ONLY.**

SCALE: 1:2500
Originating Group:

DRAWN BY:

DATE 25/04/2016

Drawing No. Upper Bow - Ron G 2