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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment and Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 January 2017</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Environmental and Commercial Services</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>ERC/ENV/RG/16.295</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Willie Rennie</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>714761</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Cemetery Development</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress as regards the proposed extension of Greenock Cemetery and to request the approval of funding to proceed with the design and construction of the extension subject to ongoing site investigations being satisfactory. The approval of funding is also requested in respect of the feasibility of extending Port Glasgow and Kilmacolm Cemeteries.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Burial of the dead 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 Knocknairshell Cemetery to meet demand for approximately five years. Knocknairshell is the only cemetery in Inverclyde which has new lairs available and this has been the case since 1994.
- 2.2 In September 2016, the Committee approved funding to undertake feasibility studies into the extension of Greenock Cemetery onto adjacent land at upper Bow Farm, and said studies are underway at present. Preliminary indications are that part of the site may be suitable for expansion. Detailed studies are ongoing and, subject to a satisfactory outcome, it is proposed to move directly to the design and construction phases of the extension of Greenock Cemetery. The proposed extension will involve the creation of as many new burial lairs as is practicable.
- 2.3 Other existing cemeteries, namely Port Glasgow and Kilmacolm, are also being investigated as to whether or not they could be extended. Preliminary investigations as regards Inverkip Cemetery indicate that the surrounding land is not owned by Inverclyde Council and it would likely be expensive to purchase. The land surrounding Gourrock Cemetery is not suitable for cemetery expansion for reasons stipulated.
- 2.4 The prospects of other as yet unidentified potential sites for cemetery development will be investigated.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee note that a site investigation is now underway to confirm whether it is feasible to expand Greenock Cemetery onto vacant adjacent land in upper Bow Farm.
- 3.2 The Committee approve funding of £50k in order that other possible sites for cemetery development are explored including possible extensions of Port Glasgow and Kilmacolm Cemeteries, and other potential sites at locations yet to be confirmed.
- 3.3 The Committee note there will be further reports brought forward on the outcome of the feasibility studies when the information is available, and that revenue implications will be confirmed at that stage.
- 3.4 The Committee approve in principle funding of £1.5m for expansion of appropriate cemetery sites following the results of the feasibility studies, this funding to be remitted to the Budget Process for formal approval and to be included in the 2017/20 Capital Budget.

**Robert Graham**  
**Head of Environmental and Commercial Services**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A report to the September 2016 Environment and Regeneration Committee advised that burial of the dead is a statutory obligation on local authorities hence 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 five years – to 2021, however it has already been confirmed that further expansion of Knocknairshill Cemetery is not feasible due to inappropriate ground conditions. Therefore, either one or more existing cemeteries will have to be extended, or a new cemetery constructed at a new location.
- 4.2 Each local authority must provide one burial ground within the area of the local authority and may provide other burial grounds within that area.

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.

### 4.4 Inverkip Cemetery

Inverkip Cemetery is comprised of two distinct sites separated by Millhouse Road. Old Inverkip Cemetery is to the north of Millhouse Road; it is no longer in use for burials and has not been for a number of years. The more modern part of the cemetery is on the south side of Millhouse Road and is still in use, however there are no new lairs available for sale. Expansion of Inverkip Cemetery was previously considered in the 1990's and again in 2003, but the option was rejected in favour of development of the Knocknairshill site. The land is not owned by Inverclyde Council.

### 4.5 Gourock Cemetery

Gourock Cemetery has no new lairs available for sale and this has been the case for a number of years. There is an undeveloped section of land directly adjacent to the north east boundary of the cemetery. The land is unused and heavily vegetated by woodland and scrub species; it is believed to be owned by Inverclyde Council, but confirmation of same would be required before a more detailed site assessment could take place. Due to the location of existing lairs and the topography of the site, vehicular access would not be possible directly from the existing cemetery, a new vehicle access would have to be created from Hilltop Road. Considerable sections of the site are steep and there is also evidence of underlying rock on a significant proportion of the site. Some localised wet areas are apparent. The site is bounded by housing to the east and west, the existing cemetery to the south and Hilltop Road to the north. Taking into account the topography, prevalence of rock and the need for a buffer zone between the adjacent housing, the site would not be suitable to develop as a cemetery. There is a further plot of land to the south that was previously considered for cemetery expansion. The plot is a well maintained open space plot adjacent to York Road, Greenock; it is less than 50m from housing. The site was superficially assessed for potential expansion in 1984-86 and again in 1995, on both occasions it was decided not to proceed with the option. Rock is evident near the surface and our experience of attempting to dig graves within the existing cemetery close to this site is that underlying rock is an insurmountable problem. The land is not owned by Inverclyde Council.

## Port Glasgow Cemetery

Port Glasgow Cemetery has no new lairs available for sale and this has been the case for a number of years. It may be feasible to construct an extension on land to the west of the current cemetery; it is currently overgrown scrub. The site in question is quite expansive; the part of the plot which offers the most potential for cemetery development from a topographical point of view is directly adjacent to the existing cemetery and High Carnegie Road. Inverclyde Council most likely owns the area in question, but confirmation of same would be required before a more detailed site assessment could take place.

## Kilmacolm Cemetery

Kilmacolm Cemetery has no new lairs available for sale and this has been the case for a number of years. The cemetery is surrounded on all sides by productive arable or grazing land. The land is not owned by Inverclyde Council. To the north of the existing cemetery, the land has a gentle gradient rising above the existing cemetery. To the south, the gradients are also relatively gentle and the land would seem on the face of it to be suitable for the development of a cemetery. From analysis of vegetation types and other visual indicators, the sites would appear to be relatively well drained, particularly the arable land. There is some indication of rock close to the surface to the north east. The grazing land to the north of the cemetery also contains some mature trees which could form an appropriate landscape feature. The proportions of the plots surrounding the existing cemetery may offer the opportunity to expand the cemetery in an incremental manner. The land is not owned by Inverclyde Council.

## **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). 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 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) is underway to identify and record the makeup of the terrain above and below ground. 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 is being carried out on the upper Bow Farm land at present and, if the results are favourable, it is intended to proceed with the requisite SEPA assessments. In anticipation of a favourable outcome, it is proposed to proceed with the design and construction of an extension to Greenock Cemetery. The proposed extension of Greenock Cemetery will involve the creation of as many new burial lairs as is practicable.
- 6.2 An extension to Port Glasgow Cemetery will also be investigated; in the first instance, the ownership of the adjacent land will be confirmed. Most, but not all, land adjacent to the cemetery is believed to be in Inverclyde Council ownership. Once the extent and boundaries of Inverclyde Council ownership is confirmed, it is proposed to commence site investigations in order to assess the suitability of the land for a cemetery extension.
- 6.3 Likewise, an extension to Kilmacolm Cemetery will be investigated. The land surrounding the existing cemetery is not owned by Inverclyde Council, so only confirmation of ownership is being pursued at present.
- 6.4 The prospects of other as yet unidentified potential sites for cemetery development will be investigated.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

#### 7.1 Financial Implications

##### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend £'000	Comments
Capital	Feasibility Studies	2017/19	50	Legal searches to confirm ownership of land and site investigations of sites that could potentially be used for future cemetery expansion or development. Note this is in addition to £30k already approved by committee in September 2016.
Capital	Cemetery Development	2017/19	1,500	Design and construct extension Greenock Cemetery.

##### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Revenue		2018/19			These costs will be included in a future report to committee.

## **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 Greenock 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 is a key consideration in the Planning process associated with all cemetery development.

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 4, 20/09/2016: Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Cemeteries on Groundwater.