

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Environment and Transportation Committee

approval noting

Ref NP/VA/TN

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Cemeteries Service Burial Space Needs & Child Burial Fees

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Executive Summary

This report presents Elected Members with updated information on burial space needs within North Lanarkshire, and actions proposed to provide sufficient new burial space on a community basis. It also updates on the implementation of the Scottish Government joint agreement with COSLA for the removal of burial and cremation fees for children aged under 18.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Environment and Transportation Committee:

- (1) Note the existing provision of new lairs,
- (2) Agree the approaches detailed to secure land for the extension of Bedlay, New Monkland and Coltswood Road cemeteries,
- (3) Approve the development of a new cemetery for Wishaw at Pather Farm,

Supporting Documents

Council business plan to 2020 The council is legally required to provide appropriate burial space for its residents choosing burial as an end of life option. This project aims to deliver this statutory requirement in the most resource effective manner, meeting with the objective to “improve the council’s resource base”.

Appendix 1 Burial Space Strategy – April 2019

1. Background

- 1.1 North Lanarkshire Council provides upwards of 1,900 interments each year, and a significant percentage of these are within new lairs, 474 in 2017-18. As burial authority, North Lanarkshire Council is statutorily required to provide sufficient burial space for its residents choosing burial as their end of life option.
 - 1.2 This report builds on the report of 26 April 2016 provided to the Environmental Services Committee, updating on provision of burial space across North Lanarkshire and recommending securing sufficient burial space on a community basis for the next 20 years.
 - 1.3 This report also updates on North Lanarkshire Council's implementation of the Scottish Government joint agreement with COSLA, announced on the 30 May 2018, to remove local authority burial and cremation fees for children aged under 18.
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2. Report

- 2.1 There are 15 operational cemeteries in North Lanarkshire, seven of which offer new lairs. Appendix 1 shows the currently available new lair provision across North Lanarkshire.
- 2.2 Bedlay Cemetery is already closed for new lairs, awaiting an extension which is subject to a section 75 agreement with an adjacent housing development. Without the development of additional burial space, three further cemeteries, Cambusnethan, New Monkland, and Coltswood Road, will run out of space within eight years, and all cemeteries currently offering new lairs will run out within 17 years.
- 2.3 The main options for increasing burial space, in order of decreasing cost-effectiveness are:
 1. Development of unused or under-used areas within existing cemeteries
 2. Extension of existing cemeteries
 3. Development of new cemeteries.
- 2.4 Within the four cemeteries which have, or will in the next 8 years, run out of new lair space, there are no unused or under-used areas that could be developed.
- 2.5 Bedlay, New Monkland and Coltswood Road cemeteries all have land adjacent which is suitable for burial. The service intends to obtain the rights to develop this adjacent land for new lair provision. At Bedlay cemetery this process is already underway and the service is liaising with the Planning department in respect of the section 75 agreement. New Monkland cemetery has available ground to the north, however there is more suitable ground in private ownership. The service intends to investigate the possibility of securing the more suitable ground. Coltswood Road cemetery has suitable land to the west, the service intends to pursue the transfer of this land for burial space development.
- 2.6 Cambusnethan Cemetery has already been extended several times, and there is now no remaining adjacent land suitable for burial. The service therefore intends to develop a new cemetery for Wishaw. Suitable land within the council's ownership has been identified at Pather Farm, and the service is currently

drawing up initial designs and intends to submit a planning application for a new cemetery at this location by summer 2019. Phase 1 would see the creation of approximately 1000 new lairs, which would provide for 11 years at current levels of demand. More than 1600 further lairs would be created in additional phases.

- 2.7 Provision for Muslim burial at Cambusnethan and Eastfield cemeteries remains sufficient due to the low number of interments, however this shall be monitored for any increases and suitable provision made as required.
- 2.8 The service has removed child burial fees as per the Scottish Government / COSLA agreement effective September 2018. This removes all fees including Interment fee, Lair purchase (exclusive right of burial) and Headstone permit, for children aged 17 and under, for both residents and non-residents. It is further proposed that North Lanarkshire Council should develop an agreement with Dignity Crematoria Ltd for the consistent removal of child cremation fees. While it should be noted that the agreement does not apply to stillborn babies or non-viable foetus, the Council will continue its current policy and will not charge a burial fee in these circumstances.
- 2.9 In August 2018, the Scottish Government undertook a consultation on Draft Statutory Guidance on Funeral Costs. The draft guidelines included measures to increase clarity and transparency in the presentation of funeral costs, a proposed definition of a “simple” funeral service, and provision that burial and cremation authorities should make reasonable effort to accommodate the wishes of a person that does not want to use a funeral director. These measures support the ability of the consumer to choose a lower cost funeral if appropriate to them. The proposed guidelines also set out specific requirements of local authorities to consult with the public when developing charging proposals, to publish information from their Local Financial Returns relating to burial and cremation services, to link burial and cremation charge setting to broader strategies and duties aimed at reducing poverty, and to take action to support individuals who are struggling with the cost of a funeral. The Scottish Government aims to publish final guidelines in due course and the service will await these to inform its approach to tackling funeral poverty.
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3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

COSLA Leaders have endorsed the Fairer Scotland Action Plan which includes an action on funeral poverty. Local Government is committed to working with the Scottish Government to understand the reasons for variation in funeral charges and look at whether the way this information is presented can be made more consistent. COSLA is also committed to bringing local authorities together to discuss ways they can contribute to tackling funeral poverty and North Lanarkshire Council are engaged in these discussions.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

No Equality Impact Assessment has taken place at this time.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

£3.38M has been allocated from the council's 2018-23 capital budget to burial space development, for cemetery extensions at New Monkland and Bedlay Cemeteries, and a new cemetery for Wishaw. Funds will be required and requested from future capital programme funds to progress the extension of Coltswood Road cemetery and ongoing development of burial space.

Removal of all child burial fees will have an impact on the income to the cemeteries service, particularly in the sale of new lairs. The Scottish Government have proposed additional funding for the first three years to support the policy change. The loss of income is estimated to be around £18,000 per annum. Agreement on the consistent waiving of fees with Holytown Crematorium may incur additional cost.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

North Lanarkshire Council is required under the terms of the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855 to provide facilities for the burial of the dead.

4.3 Environmental Impact

The environmental impact of cemetery extensions and new cemetery development will be considered as part of the planning process.

4.4 Risk Impact

Management of risk is ongoing through the project management process.

5. Measures of success

5.1 Successful completion of the burial space development projects identified.

5.2 Ongoing monitoring of burial space provision through the Burial Space Strategy.

5.3 New burial space remains available on a community basis.



**Nicole Paterson,
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Appendix 1 – Burial Space Strategy – April 2019

New lair life span by runout date

Cemetery	Runout Date of Developed Lairs (April 2019)	Runout Date of Lairs being Developed During 2019/20	Potential Additional Life Span	Runout Date of Developed Lairs + Potential lairs
Bedlay Cemetery	closed at present time for new lairs	-	Extension being developed, subject to section 75 agreement with developer, currently redirecting burials to other cemeteries	20 years capacity, once developed
Cambusnethan Cemetery	Aug-2024	-	none	Aug-2024
New Monkland Cemetery*	Nov-2026	-	Area to north, subject to land swap	Feb-2041
Coltswood Road Cemetery	Dec-2026	-	Development of fields to west	Feb-2045
Bothwellhaugh Cemetery	May-2032	-	Phased development within cemetery boundaries	Apr-2057
Kilsyth Cemetery	Jun-2033	-	-	Jun-2033
Cambusnethan Cemetery Muslim Burial Space	Jun-2034	-	Further development of remaining Muslim area	Feb-2049
Benhar Cemetery	Jul-2035	-	Potential extension into council-owned land to north	Jun-2084
Eastfield Cemetery	Sep-2035	-	Area to east, requires geotechnical investigation	Nov-2086
Eastfield Cemetery Muslim Burial Space	Apr-2291	-	Very low demand at present	Apr-2291
* adjusted to accommodate demand transferring from St Joseph's cemetery				