

FUTURE COUNCIL CEMETERY PROVISION	7 February 2017
TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	
FOR DECISION	

Linkage to Corporate Plan	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	Provision of burial ground for the medium to long term
Lead Officer	Head of Estates
Cost: (If applicable)	£20,000 - £40,000 estimate for Tier 1& 2 report

1.0 Background

Council currently operate 7 cemeteries throughout the Borough. Many of these cemeteries have been in existence for several decades and, in some instances, are nearing capacity. The attached table at Appendix III details the current standing of each cemetery providing an estimate of when this capacity will be reached.

Points to note:

1. Column A gives detail on remaining unused ground at each location.
2. Depending on extent of infrastructure (roads, paths, landscaping, toilets etc) a well laid out cemetery should provide around 1600 -2000 plots per hectare. The attached table uses the more conservative figure of 1600 (Column B). Traditionally there are up to 3 committals in each grave.
3. Column C gives the current annual rate of committals since April 2015. Some will be re-openings and some will be in new graves.
4. Columns D&E provide an estimate of the lifespan at each location based on current rates. Column D is a worst case scenario where all committals are in new graves hence the very limited time to full capacity. Column E uses an estimate of 65% of committals being in re-openings and 35% in new graves. This is a more representative estimate but the actual lifespan may rest somewhere between these two figures (see Column F).

1.1 Detail

Given that cemetery provision can take considerable time – perhaps measured in years, the attached table confirms that there is limited future capacity in Portstewart, Coleraine and Ballymoney. However, Ballywillan Cemetery, Portrush is rapidly running out of burial space with between 1.9 and 5.5 years left at current burial rates.

Coleraine Borough Council recognised this in 2010 and commissioned a study to ascertain if it would be possible to extend the existing cemetery. Extensive work was undertaken by consultant, Atkins, on behalf of Council. This included archaeological and geotechnical ground investigations. It was concluded that the site could not be extended, primarily because:

1. Potential for contaminated groundwater to migrate from site through gravel deposits.
2. Due to high water table, there would be a reduction in burial depth to 1.8m (requires 2.8m for 3 committals).
3. Presence of archaeological remains (field to western border).

To provide an on-going burial service in the Portrush area (and other areas) Council need to consider developing new cemeteries. A number of factors need to be taken into consideration in the provision of a new cemetery, not least:

- a) Size (50 + years capacity)
- b) Access (roads, public transport)
- c) Hydrology (groundwater)
- d) Flood Risk
- e) Planning designation
- f) Visual impact (proximity to neighbours)
- g) Environmental designations
- h) Topography (no excessive slopes etc)
- i) Archaeological assessment
- j) Neutral location (denomination, ethnicity etc)
- k) Willing landowner
- l) Cost effective to develop

Due to the legislative requirements, the significant number of stakeholders and extensive consultation, it is imperative that, following on from work carried out by CBC, effort resumes now to ensure that additional cemetery provision is in place before Ballywillan, in particular, reaches capacity. This work can be split into three phases:

1. Tier 1: Risk Screening.
Using publically available information (topographical, geological, hydrogeological, town development plans etc) identify possible sites for further investigation. Principle factors at this stage include ground water vulnerability, distance from water supplies and points covered by a) to l) above.
2. Tier 2: Risk Assessment
As well as the Tier 1 findings, NIEA will require an intrusive site investigation, water features survey and hydrogeological risk assessment. An indicative plan of the proposed cemetery layout is also required at this stage.
3. Tier 3: Quantitive Risk Assessment
If the risk of the proposed site is deemed high or not clearly defined from Tier 2 assessment, then further intrusive testing is required. This may include

monthly sampling/monitoring of water for up to 12 months prior to developing site and for a period of 12 months post development.

1.2 Cemetery Provision Moyle Area

A) Background

Council operate cemeteries in three of the 4 legacy council areas. There is no council provision on the Moyle area. Some preliminary discussions with Churches in the Moyle area confirmed that, in some instances, Churches are running out of burial ground. There is also no public provision for non-Christian/ethnic burials. As the centre of population for the area any potential cemetery provision would probably be best placed close to Ballycastle.

1.3 Recommendation

Council are asked to approve a tendering process to appoint a cemetery development specialist to undertake a Tier 1 study to investigate potential cemetery development in **Portrush, Portstewart, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Ballycastle** (or any combination thereof). Subject to findings of this investigation, oversee a Tier 2 study to further confirm the suitability of potential sites.

Future Cemetery Provision

Appendix III

		A	B	C	D	E	F
Location	Address	Area Remaining	Burial average	Current Rate	Availability in yrs	Availability in yrs	Median Value
		Hectares	(1600/hect)*	Per annum	100% new graves	35% new graves	Cols D&E
Ballymoney	Knock Road	0.4	640	82	7.8	22.3	15.1
Ballywillan	Portrush	0.08	128	66	1.9	5.5	3.7
Coleraine	Atlantic Road	0.64	1024	129	7.9	22.7	15.3
Kilrea**	Blackrock Road	0.59	944	14	67	192.7	130.0
Limavady	Scroogy Road	0.63	1008	32	31.5	90.0	60.8
Portstewart	Agherton Road	0.09	144	36	4.0	11.4	7.7
Portstewart	Coleraine Road	0.41	656	50	13.1	37.5	25.3
Rasharkin	Finvoy Road	0.42	672	2	336	960.0	648.0
		3.26	5216	411			

Burial Average* Depends on many factors (cemetery layout, ground conditions, planning constraints etc)

Kilrea** includes allowance for additional parking reducing available plots