



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	City of Belfast Crematorium – Mercury Abatement Options Appraisal
Date:	16 June 2008
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Relevant Background Information

Forthcoming Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (GB)/Department of the Environment legislation requires that by 2012, UK based crematoria must remove mercury emissions from the flue gasses of at least 50% of all their cremations. To comply with the legislation £1,050,000 has been included in the Capital Programme for the installation of equipment to provide 50% abatement. This was originally included in the 2008/09 estimates. This will need to be revisited to ensure that implementation happens in good time to comply with the legislative requirement.

The Community and Recreation (Parks and Cemeteries Services) Sub-Committee at its meeting on 3 April 2007 granted authority to engage consultants to provide an independent appraisal of the extent of mercury abatement that should be provided at City of Belfast Crematorium.

The consultant's report reviews a number of options, and further considers the need to expand the City of Belfast Crematorium facility, to allow for an additional chapel and ancillary rooms.

Key Issues

Through the assessment of monetary and non-monetary factors, the report (attached as Appendix 1) recommends 100% mercury abatement should be implemented at the Crematorium. Legislatively this would directly meet the minimum (50%) mercury abatement by 2012, and also gives cognisance to the expected Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic Commission guidance

for 100% abatement by 2020. The 'spare' 50% abatement capacity would therefore be traded through the Cremator Abatement of Mercury Omissions Organisation's burden sharing scheme to offset the increased operating costs incurred through the installation and operation of mercury abatement equipment. This would result in a £91,000 per annum income to the Council based on current cremation rates.

Consultations with key stakeholders including DOE, EHS and Castlereagh Borough Council noted that many local stakeholders expected abatement to at least 50% in order to reduce the impact of cremation on the local environment. Also Castlereagh Borough Council who regulate the Crematorium facility indicated that they expected 50% abatement, with a preference for 100%, but acknowledged the cost implications to the Council.

The report also considers the need for an additional chapel and ancillary rooms. This would allow for the increasing demand to use the facility through the scheduled improvements, and provide capacity for larger numbers at cremation services. The provision of a second chapel would have a number of constraints, including integration with the current basement Cremator Hall, disruption to services due to construction noise, duct, etc, and the fact that there are potential plans for privately owned crematoria in locations such as Moira.

The report concludes that further practical consideration and research including cost considerations are required into the affordability and ongoing service implications of providing an additional chapel.

Resource Implications

Financial

An amount of £1,050,000 has been included in the Capital Programme for the provision of 50% mercury abatement. An additional estimated amount of £500,000 will be required to allow for 100% mercury abatement of all cremations at City of Belfast Crematorium.

The cost of cremations will need to be increased to offset increased operating costs, however should the 100% abatement option be approved, the 'spare' 50% abatement capacity may be traded through the CAMEO burden sharing scheme to partially offset the increased operating costs.

Human Resources

In relation to mercury abatement, dependant on the chosen system there may be a slight increase in cremation time.

Asset and Other Implications

In relation to mercury abatement, providing at least 50% abatement will ensure that the facility is compliant with the legislation's 2012 deadline and failure to comply with the 50% abatement requirements is likely to result in the withdrawal of the operating licence. Providing 100% abatement will ensure compliance with any future enhanced legislative requirements.

In relation to providing an additional chapel, this will be assessed as part of the proposed business case exercise.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) Agree that 100% mercury abatement at the Crematorium is the best environmental and cost effective option;
- ii) approve that the increase in the Capital Programme amount be referred to SP&R Committee to allow for 100% mercury abatement at City of Belfast Crematorium; and
- iii) grant authority for a full business analysis be carried out to investigate the requirement for, and practicality of, providing an additional chapel at City of Belfast Crematorium.

Abbreviations

CAMEO	Cremator Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (GB)
DOE	Department of Environment (NI)
EHS	Environment and Heritage Service (NI)
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (the "OSPAR convention")

Documents attached

Appendix 1: Consultants report of May 2008

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