



Subject:	Notice of Motion – Provision of Sustainable Burial Options
Date:	10 February 2026
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Seamus McBride, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider the Notice of Motion received at the meeting of the Council on 1st December 2025 in relation to Provision of Sustainable Burial Options.
1.2	This paper provides background information and an update regarding the Notice of Motion.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note and agree this report in response to the Notice of Motion. It is recommended that the inclusion of sustainable burial alternatives, such as natural burial areas or woodland internment spaces, will be considered within the design and planning of any new cemetery land.

3.0	Main report
3.1	A Notice of Motion was initially received at the Standards and Business Committee meeting of 20 November 2025 in relation to Provision of Sustainable Burial Options. Following the Council meeting of 01 December 2025, it was referred to the People and Communities Committee, and an initial report was presented to the Committee at its meeting of 02 December 2025.
3.2	Subsequently, a report was presented to the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group on 14 th January 2026, and, after discussion, the Working Group recommended that the Motion was referred to the People and Communities Committee.
3.3	<p>The motion calls upon the Council to explore the feasibility of providing sustainable burial options within existing or new cemeteries:</p> <p>"That this Council recognises the significant environmental impact of traditional burial and cremation practices, including high carbon emissions, chemical pollution, and long-term land use challenges, as highlighted in the All-Party Group on Climate Action's briefing paper "Beyond Burial and Cremation".</p> <p>This Council further acknowledges the growing public interest in more sustainable, dignified, and low-carbon alternatives to conventional practices – such as natural (green) burials, tree pod interment, and other emerging end-of life methods.</p> <p>Natural burial, which involves the use of biodegradable materials, avoids embalming, and often takes place in woodland or meadow settings with minimal ongoing maintenance, has already been successfully implemented elsewhere as a simple and ecologically restorative option.</p> <p>Accordingly, this Council agrees to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the feasibility of providing sustainable burial options within existing or new cemeteries, including the designation of natural burial grounds or woodland burial areas within our district; and 2. Provide an update report on any identified legislative, planning, infrastructural, or regulatory barriers that may impact the delivery of these sustainable end-of-life options locally. " <p>Proposer: Councillor Hedley Abernethy Seconder: Councillor Tara Brooks</p>
3.4	The Committee is reminded that a report was presented to the Parks and Leisure Committee on 11 November 2010 (attached in Appendix 1). The report recommended that further investigations regarding the feasibility of providing a natural burial ground at Roselawn should take place, and that engineering and feasibility studies consultancy support would be required.

3.5	<p>Subsequently, a Hydrogeological Survey was undertaken in 2014, but further substantial work did not proceed due to consideration of the proposed new crematorium, as the footprint of the potential new building is adjacent to the identified site for natural burials.</p>
3.6	<p>There is thus, currently, no provision for natural or green burials within cemeteries managed by the City Council. The Committee will be aware that the Council is actively engaged in reviewing potential land acquisition options for the development of a new cemetery.</p>
3.7	<p>As part of this process, the inclusion of sustainable burial alternatives, such as natural burial areas or woodland internment spaces, will be considered within the design and planning of any new site. The feasibility of incorporating such options will be subject to compliance with all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements, including planning, environmental and public health legislation.</p>
3.8	<p>The City Council's cemeteries operate under the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992, which remains the principal legislation governing burials. The development of sustainable burial options, such as natural or woodland burials grounds, is subject to a range of statutory planning requirements including detailed assessments of land use, ground conditions, drainage and potential environmental impacts to ensure suitability and long-term sustainability. This ensures that both environmental protections and public health safeguards will be maintained throughout the planning and operational processes.</p>
3.9	<p>Any decision to provide natural burial facilities will also involve engagement with local communities, potentially through a public consultation process, to assess levels of public interest and support for these environmentally conscious alternatives.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>While the potential acquisition of land for the development of a new cemetery, and any associated plans for the inclusion of sustainable natural burial alternatives will have significant financial and resource implications, at this time, there are no specific, immediate financial and resource implications associated with this report.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	Report to Parks and Leisure Committee, 'Natural Burials', 11 November 2010