

**Central Durham Crematorium
Joint Committee**

24 April 2013

**Report of the Superintendent and
Registrar**



Report of Alan José, Superintendant and Registrar

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee with the quarterly update relating to performance and other operational matters.

Performance Update - Number of Cremations

2. The table below provides details of the number of cremations for the period 1 January 2013 to 31 March 2013 inclusive with comparative data in the same period:

	2011/12	2012/13	Change
	Period [Jan- March]	Period [Jan- March]	
JANUARY	231 + 2*	291 + 1*	+ 60 – 1*
FEBRUARY	210 + 2*	223	+ 13 – 2*
MARCH	212 + 2*	216 + 1*	+ 4 – 1*
TOTAL QTR4	653 + 6*	730 + 2*	+ 77 – 4*

* = Non Viable Foetus (NVF) ** = Stillborns (STs) *** = Body parts

3. The full profile of where families came from can be seen in Appendix 2. In summary 300 came from Durham and 430 from outside of the area. There was 2 NVF cremations undertaken for the period 1 January 2013 to 31 March 2013, compared to 6 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 2 NVF and an increase of 77 Cremations (11.8%). The comparative figures for the two financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13 are as follows:

- 2011/2012: 2,200 cremations
- 2012/2013: 2,379 cremations. An increase of 179 over the comparative period (8.1%)

The budget assumed 2,040 cremations would be undertaken in 2012/13.

Memorials

4. The Table below outlines the number and value of the memorials sold in Quarter 4 2013 compared to the same period the previous year (2012). The numbers include 1 Renewal of Plaques that have come to the end of the original 10 year lease.

	Period Jan-March 2012		Period Jan-March 2013	
	Number	£	Number	£
Vase Blocks	8	3,638.00	5	2,181.67
Large Plaques	29	9,966.67	17	4,956.01
Small Plaques	3	654.00	2	436.00
Niche	2	2,090.00	0	0.00
Renewal	3	436.33	1	145.00
Total	45	16,785 .00	25	7,718.68

5. In overall terms for the period 1 January – 31 March 2013, the number and value of memorials total 25/£7,718.68, compared to 45/£16,785.00 in 2011/12 – a decrease of 20/£9,066.32 over the comparative periods.

Cremation & Burial Conference & Exhibition 2013

6. As in previous years, the necessary arrangements have been made for representation at the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial & Cremation Authorities and The Cremation Society of Great Britain. Councillor John Marr will be attending the Conference which is to be held at The Holiday Inn, Stratford-upon-Avon from Monday 1 to Wednesday 3 July 2013.

Operational Matters

7. The Superintendent and Registrar at the Central Durham Crematorium has advised both Officers and Members of Durham County Council and Spennymoor Town Council of his resignation from post with effect from 31 May 2013.
8. Options have been considered with the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Committee regarding the replacement for the Superintendent and Registrar.

For Members' information, the following options were considered:

- Joint Management Arrangements
 - Support via an SLA with DCC Bereavement Services
 - Replacement for the Superintendent and Registrar.
9. Following discussions, it is proposed that a replacement for the Superintendent and Registrar be sought.
10. A meeting at Durham Crematorium had been arranged for Monday 20th May 2013 at 6pm, to which Funeral Directors, Clergy, Funeral Celebrants and other interested parties will be invited.

11. The purpose of the meeting is to explain the proposals for replacing the Superintendent and Registrar and to assure everyone that the same high standards of service will be maintained in the interim period before an appointment is made.
12. The meeting will also be an opportunity to advise that the Construction Programme Management Unit will be undertaking a Feasibility Study at the Crematorium looking at how the public areas can be improved with a view to reporting to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee in September.
13. To ensure business continuity in the short to medium term, from 3 June 2013, arrangements have been made for Mr Raymond Goodson to work at the Crematorium on a temporary contract for 3 months. Members will recall that Mr Goodson has provided temporary staff cover at the Crematorium in the past. Mr Goodson has experience of all aspects of the Crematorium operation and the administration software package BACAS.

Business Administration Apprenticeship

14. In addition to the discussions being held regarding the Superintendent and Registrar post, consideration has been given (to further ensure business continuity for the longer term) to the employment of a Business Administration Apprentice. The table below identifies the costs (including NI and Pension Contributions based on a level 2 entry) to the Joint Committee of employing a Business apprentice on a two year fixed term contract. Full details of the scheme are attached within the Briefing Note provided by DCC organisational Design and Development Team Leader – Joanna Coppillie at Appendix 3.

Age	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Total £
16-18	6,469	7,057	13,526
19-20	6,469	10,989	17,458
21+	6,469	13,865	20,334

15. Members should note that these amounts are not reflected in the budgets presented at the January meeting and if members approve the apprenticeship, that a revised budget be presented to Committee at a later date.

Durham Crematorium Pre-Payment Bond

16. The D.C.C. Solicitor submitted the application for registration with the FSA on 1 August 2012. In December 2012 confirmation was received by the FSA of the acceptance of the application. The FSA has since however, highlighted possible implications to the ongoing activities of Durham County Council with regards to regulated service provision exemptions.
17. In order to ensure that the full legal status/ implications have been considered prior to implementing a pre payment bond scheme further advice has been sought (via Durham Crematorium Joint Committee) by Financial Services Regulatory Consultants - Bovill. A copy of the preliminary advice report is attached at Appendix 4.
18. Bovill advise that the Council's application be withdrawn due to unknown wider implications and potential threats to Durham County Councils regulated activities (resulting in loss of exemptions).

19. As Members will see within Appendix 4, Bovill have considered the possibility of/ argument for such bonds being classified as contracts of Insurance. They have advised, however that it would not be practicable for Durham County Council to be authorised as an insurer rather (should this be an avenue for further consideration), and that arrangements for the performance of the contracts be put in place for the bonds to be underwritten by an authorised insurer.
20. Whilst the scheme would be very popular with Funeral Directors, in consideration of the advice received and given the lengthy and potentially costly processes required to undertake a tender exercise to invite/ appoint insurance providers, the bond scheme potentially has more negative than positive effects to the Joint Committee. As such the continuation of the scheme must be brought into question

Green Energy Proposals

21. As Members may recollect a Feasibility study was commissioned with regards to the installation new heat recovery measures at Durham Crematorium. These measures would make use of waste heat produced by the recently installed cremators which is presently discharged into the atmosphere. The primary purpose of the project is to utilise this waste heat energy for the operation of the Crematorium, with any excess being exported off site.
22. Whilst the Feasibility Study is not finalised, a number of possible uses for the waste heat have been identified at this stage, although three specific proposals are recommended for consideration within this report:
 - To provide an alternative source of heating to two residential bungalows, which are located on the crematorium site
 - To provide de-icing and frost control to the drive and pathways in the immediate vicinity of the crematorium building main entrance and exit, by means of underground heating
 - To provide electricity generation by means of a turbine generator, which runs on the *organic Rankine-cycle* principle.
23. In order to realise the benefits identified in the feasibility study, capital investment will need to be undertaken. The known estimated capital costs at this stage of the proposals are as follows:

Heating to bungalows	£71,600
Heating to driveways/paths	£100,000
Approx Total	<u>£171,600</u>

All costs include professional fees.

24. A European Union grant is being sought to fund part of the cost of the power generation plant. This however requires partnering from similar facilities in two other European Union countries. Whilst two possible partners have been identified at the time of writing this report, the application had not been submitted so it is not clear whether this funding would be available. It is unlikely that the power generation element of the work would proceed without this grant.

25. A suggested programme is included which would allow for procurement of the proposed generating plant during 2014 with delivery/installation during mid 2015. The roadway heating and bungalow heating could be designed and procured from late 2013/early 2014 and could incorporate an enabling works contract to construct an external screened area for the accommodation of the proposed containerised electrical generating plant. It would be necessary to complete the ground works before installation of the power generation equipment could commence.

Introduction of a Coffin Footplate

26. Earlier this year there was an incident at a local Crematorium which resulted in a coffin being cremated in error. This incident obviously caused major distress to the families involved and in order to ensure no such error could occur within Durham Crematorium the Superintendent and Registrar has considered ways of improving the coffin identity process.
27. It is proposed that all coffins which are brought to Durham Crematorium for Cremation have a nameplate placed at the foot of the coffin. This footplate would be easily visible by not only Funeral Directors employees but by Clergy/Funeral Officiates and by Crematorium Staff.
28. Members should be fully aware that the risk of any such error at Durham Crematorium is extremely low as all coffins at Durham are checked to ensure that the nameplate agrees with the requisite paperwork and the Cremator operators signs his operation sheet to indicate that the check has taken place.
29. To ensure that any risk of an incorrect coffin being brought to the Crematorium is avoided, a slight change in operational processes (which would add only a very small cost to Funeral Directors in the form of a small plaque) will be required.

Recommendations:

30. It is recommended that Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee consider and agree:
- The current performance of the Crematorium.
 - The current performance with regard to the sale of memorials.
 - That Members note the date of the meeting with Funeral Directors, Clergy and interested parties.
 - The current situation with regards to the staffing operations and approve the Mr Raymond Goodson temporary contract at the Crematorium.
 - That the creation of a Business Administration Apprentice post be considered and approved.
 - Note the current situation with regards to the Pre-Payment Bond and consider whether the Joint Committee wish to pursue any further actions.
 - The progress with regards to the Green energy proposal and note that a further report will be presented once full Design has been completed and full costings have been obtained.
 - That with effect from 3 June 2013, all coffins must have a Breast Name Plate and a Foot Name Plate.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - As identified in the report.

Staffing - A member of staff is leaving the Authority and this will be reviewed in due course.

Risk - The resignation of the Superintendent & Registrar highlights possible risk regarding the Business continuity of the crematorium service. Proposals presented to Joint Committee members should mitigate any risk and ensure the efficient and effective operations going forward.

Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty - There are no Equality and Diversity implications associated with this report.

Accommodation - There are no Accommodation implications associated with this report.

Crime and Disorder - There are no Crime and Disorder implications associated with this report.

Human Rights - There are no Human Rights implications associated with this report.

Consultation - Officers of Spennymoor Town Council were consulted on the contents of this report.

Procurement - None

Disability Discrimination Act - None

Legal Implications - None