

Friends of Cemetery Groups

Operational Guidance

Introduction

The City of Edinburgh Council own and operate 43 cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds across the city. Some churchyards are hundreds of years old. St Cuthbert's, for example, dates back to around the 8th century and in 1562, Mary Queen of Scots gifted the land for Greyfriars to the Council. Church of Scotland churchyards were formally transferred into Council ownership by act of parliament in 1925. By the 1980's many of the private cemeteries established during the Victorian period had come to the end of their operational life and were compulsorily purchased after suffering significant neglect.

Many of Edinburgh's historic graveyards have now become full. The passing of time and demographic changes mean some graveyards no longer have the same strong familial links to the local community. Over the last century burials in Edinburgh have fallen from 100% of funerals to around 15% significantly reducing the income available to manage graveyards. Therefore, the creation and operation of Friends of Groups is very welcome.

Guidance Objectives

This guidance will support volunteers in providing their discretionary energy to cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds across the city with the objectives of:

- Strengthening links to the local community, to help bring the city's graveyards back to the centre of community life;
- Promoting their heritage, community memories, biodiversity, historical and educational values;
- Supporting public enjoyment and understanding of the graveyards by improving their amenity, appearance and condition;
- Recognising a graveyard's individual character.

Guiding Principles

1. Recognise that families may still visit graves, therefore accord due respect to the deceased and their families.
2. Be welcoming to visitors and neighbours.
3. Comply with all Cemetery Management Rules.
4. Recognise that cemeteries can present significant health and safety risks from toppling memorials, boundary walls, gates, trees and other structures and undertake appropriate risk assessments in advance of a work task.
5. Adopt best practice guidance when working on site.
6. Protect and enhance the historic landscape, built heritage and biodiversity to promote a Thriving Greenspace.
7. Contact Bereavement Services before initiating a new work task¹ and advise timeously any issues of concern.
8. Recognise that the City of Edinburgh Council has ownership of the land.

Operational Activity Guidance

Tasks Supported	Notes & Links
<p>Trees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of small self-sown saplings from poor positions • Clearance of fallen branches, leaf litter • Monitoring and evaluation of condition 	
<p>Vegetation Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of ivy from gravestones, walls and structures, except where to do so would be hazardous or would disturb birds during the nesting season • Reduction of the level of weeds such as brambles, nettles, thistles, sticky-willie, rosebay willow herb, Himalayan balsam • Weeding • Collecting up grass cuttings 	<p>The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</p>
<p>New Planting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of suitable and varied planting, in line with Council recommendations, to enhance biodiversity and amenity 	
<p>Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and recording 	
<p>Education & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting knowledge of the history and ecology of the graveyard for example by creating guidebooks • Conducting guided tours to encourage donations to the group • Assisting the public to identify and visit graves • Conducting workshops 	
<p>Gravestones & Monuments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal cleaning of grave markers in accordance with guidelines • Recording • Monitoring and evaluation of surface condition • Assisting and supporting Commonwealth War Graves Commission in their work and participating in commemoration ceremonies. 	
<p>General Tidying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter picking • Cleaning signage, benches & other furniture • Sweeping steps, drainage gutters 	

Tasks Requiring Specific Consent	Notes & links
Wildlife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of wildlife support such as bat boxes, hedgehog houses, insect boxes, beehives etc. supported by locational plan 	
Vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree planting Use of light power tools such as strimmers after completion of risk assessment and appropriate training of users 	
Gravestones, Monuments or other Structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning professionals to re-erect, reinstate or repair 	
Site furniture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of compost bins, tool sheds, benches, signage etc. Painting of ironwork 	
Tasks not supported	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of industrial machinery such as chainsaws 	Notify Bereavement services of any tree issues so they can deal with this on your behalf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application of chemical herbicides or pesticides 	Notify Bereavement Services of invasive vegetation so they can deal with this on your behalf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance of bird nesting sites during the breeding season, bats, badgers etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifting gravestones 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Remains 	Contact Bereavement Services without delay

Contacts

<p>Bereavement Services Mortonhall 30b Howdenhall Road Edinburgh EH16 6TX</p> <p>Email bereavement@edinburgh.gov.uk</p>	<p>Operational Manager Jane Matheson Team Leader Gareth Edwards Bereavement Officer Alan Thomson</p> <p>Telephone 0131 664 4314 Out of Hours 0131 200 2000</p>
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