**Edinburgh Friends of Cemetery Groups**

**Operational Guidance**

**DRAFT**

**Introduction**

The City of Edinburgh Council own and operate 39 cemeteries, graveyards, churchyards and kirkyards across the city. Some such as Greyfriars have their origins back to 1562 when Mary Queen of Scots gifted the land to the Council. The churchyards and kirkyards transferred over to Council ownership by act of parliament in 1925. By the 1980’s many of the private cemeteries in the city had come to the end of their operational life and were compulsorily purchased after suffering significant neglect.

Due to societal change in the last century burials in Edinburgh have fallen from 100% of funerals to around 15%. The consequence of that is that the income generated to manage the cemetery estate has fallen significantly. The creation of Friends of Groups is very welcome. This guidance is intended to support them in providing their discretionary energy to improve the amenity of the cemeteries, graveyards, churchyards and kirkyards across the city.

**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. Protect and enhance the biodiversity within the cemetery to promote a Thriving Greenspace.
5. Recognise that cemeteries can present significant health and safety risks from toppling memorials, boundary walls, gates, trees and other structures. Therefore, a sufficient risk assessment must be completed in advance of a work task in compliance with the Health & Safety at Work Act.
6. Contact Bereavement Services before initiating a new work task and advise timeously any issues of concern.
7. Recognise that the City of Edinburgh Council has ownership of the land.

**Operational Activity Guidance**

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| **Supported** | **Not supported** |
| Removal of ivy from gravestones, walls and structures, except where to do so would be hazardous | Use of machinery such as chainsaw |
| Reduction of the level of weeds such as brambles, nettles, thistles, sticky-willie, rosebay willow herb, Himalayan balsam | Application of chemical herbicides or pesticides |
| Introduction of suitable and varied planting, in line with CEC recommendations, to enhance biodiversity. | Disturbance of bird nesting sites during the breeding season |
| After discussion with CEC install wildlife support such as bat boxes, hedgehog houses, insect boxes, beehives etc | Restoration of gravestones without prior approval of Council Archaeology Officer. |
| Clearing litter |  |
| Monitoring wildlife |  |
| Removal small self-sown saplings from poor positions |  |
| Assisting the public to identify and visit graves |  |
| Conducting guided tours to encourage donations to the group |  |
| Creating guidebooks |  |
| Conducting workshops |  |
| Assisting and supporting Commonwealth War Graves Commission in their work and participating in commemoration ceremonies. |  |

**Contacts**

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