



Facilities, Waste & Grounds Services

Bereavement Services Cemetery Strategy

2023-2033

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This Cemetery Strategy is a strategic document which will assist the Council in providing, maintaining, and managing its cemeteries over the long term.
- 1.2. The Strategy includes all aspects of the management and operation of Council cemeteries, including those which no longer have capacity and are closed to burials. These duties range from administration of the burial process including memorial applications, maintenance, health and safety, compliance checks and memorial testing.
- 1.3. Cemeteries within the South Lanarkshire Council area are managed by Community and Enterprise Resources. The administration of cemetery services is the responsibility of Bereavement Services, and the maintenance is managed by Grounds Services.

2.0 Purpose and Vision

- 2.1. The South Lanarkshire Council Cemetery Strategy will set out the current provision, legislation and the short term, medium term, and long-term needs for cemetery provision in the Council area.
- 2.2. The Council's cemeteries are an integral part of our community infrastructure, and the Council is committed to providing our services with dignity, respect, competency, and efficiency.
- 2.3. Our service is also at the heart of the community and as such we offer a high standard of care and options to ensure that each member of the community can have a funeral which is meaningful to them and their family.
- 2.4. With the legal responsibility to provide burial ground, the Council is committed to ensuring there is adequate provision within each geographical area of the authority.
- 2.5. Our vision is to meet the on-going and changing needs of the bereaved and the wider community within South Lanarkshire.

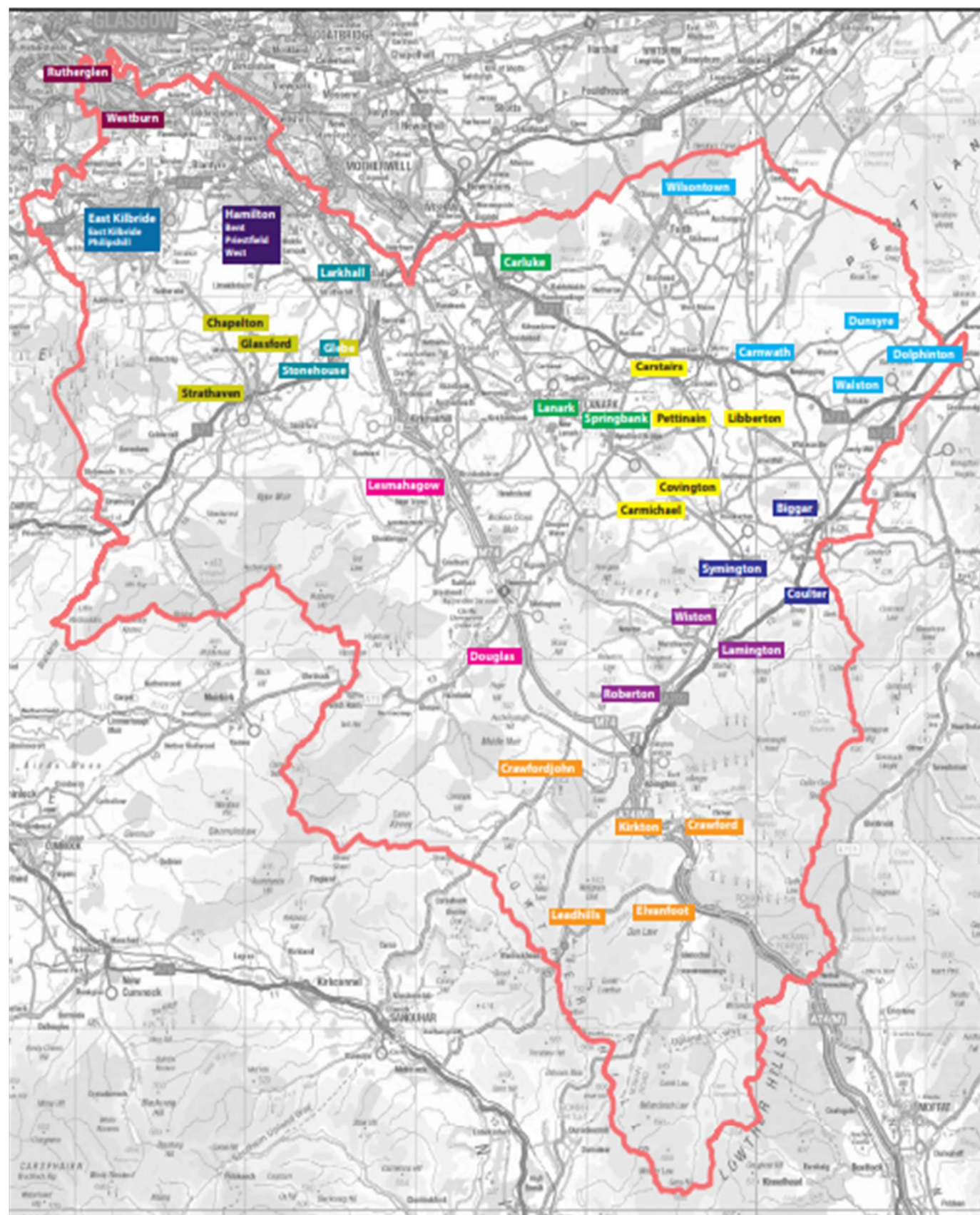
3.0 Legal Context

- 3.1. The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 22 March 2016 and received Royal Assent on 28 April 2016.
- 3.2. In July 2016, a Working Group, headed by the Scottish Government, was formed to commence work on the regulations of the Act. Priority was given to implementing part two of the Act focusing on Cremation, resulting in the Cremation (Scotland) Regulation 2019.
- 3.3. As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic this disrupted and delayed progress, however the current iteration of the Burial Regulations Working Group, set up in December 2021, seeks to continue the work of the previous Working Groups. The remit of the group is to inform the regulation of burial grounds and authorities in Scotland, the development of statutory guidance and the creation of a Code of Practice for burial authorities.
- 3.4. Whilst the legal requirement is to provide burial ground within the authority, there is no legal requirement for the Council to provide burial ground within each town or within any specific area. The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 states that for the provision of burial ground each local authority:
 - must provide one burial ground within the area of the local authority, and;
 - may provide other burial grounds within that area.

- 3.5. The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 also provides for two or more local authorities to provide burial ground jointly.
- 3.6. All burials must be authorised by the appropriate local authority and under the Act this will cover private burials (those burials which occur in any land other than a cemetery). The Council is required to keep a register for private burials.
- 3.7. The right of burial can only be sold by the local authority and at present rights are sold in perpetuity however on implementation of the full Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 rights will be sold on a lease basis of 25 years (excluding liars owned by the Commonwealth Graves Commission, these rights will remain in perpetuity). After the initial 25 years the lease period can be extended every 10 years thereafter.
- 3.8. The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 makes provision for inspection of a burial authority which the council will require to comply with all, and any enactments, codes of practice and guidance issued by the inspector. These inspections will be under the authority of the Inspector of Burial, Cremation & Funeral Directors.
- 3.9. Under the Act, and previously the National Assistance Act 1984, the Council area has a legal obligation to provide a burial or cremation for anyone who dies within our authority who has left no funds for their funeral nor anyone willing to apply for a service. Working with other partners in the Police, Hospitals, Care Homes, and Social Work Departments along with family and friends we arrange a dignified service for the deceased ensuring any religious and cultural beliefs or preferences are recognised and respected.
- 3.10. Whilst the full implementation of the burial section of the Act is still on-going the Council are actively participating in the working group.

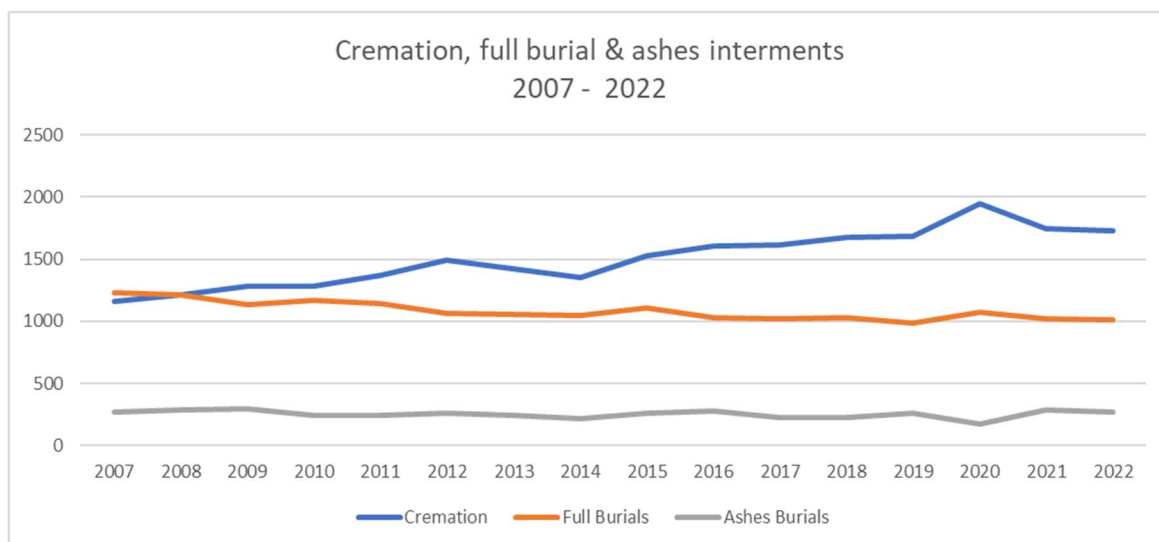
4.0 Demographic Profile, Demand & Capacity

- 4.1. South Lanarkshire is an area of 684 square miles with a population of 322,630 as at 2021.
- 4.2. There are 55 cemeteries within the South Lanarkshire area for which we provide operational works, and these include churchyards, small rural cemeteries, and large urban cemeteries.
- 4.3. Within the 55 cemeteries there are 2 cemeteries which are privately owned and for which the Council carries out excavation works required for burials. Cemetery coverage is shown in the map below.

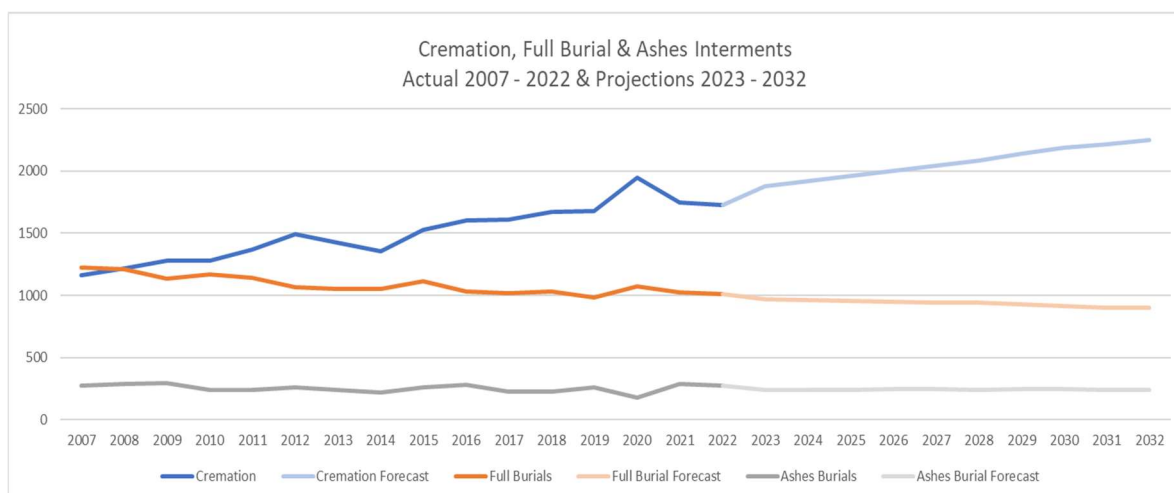


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- 4.4. The demand for bereavement services from 2007 to 2022 is shown in the chart below. 2020 can be considered an exceptional year due to the Covid pandemic, however there is a clear trend over time of the demand for burials reducing with the demand for cremations increasing. The national trend is also for increasing cremation demand is demonstrated by the figures produced the Cremation Society which charts the progress of cremations throughout the UK from the very first cremations. The latest statistics for Scotland are for 2021 and show that from annual deaths of 63,587, 44,975 (70%) were cremations. This compares to 2007 where annual deaths for Scotland were 56,313, 34,557 (61%) were cremations. For comparison, of the deaths administered in South Lanarkshire in 2021, there were 1,749 (63%) cremations and 1,022 (37%) burials.



- 4.5. Looking 10 years ahead, this trend is set to continue as the chart below demonstrates.



- 4.6. There are currently over 105,000 existing lairs across all South Lanarkshire cemeteries and a further 4,024 new lairs available. There are on average 1,154 interments every year and of those 342 are new lairs. More detailed information on each cemetery is provided in the table below.

Cemetery / Churchyard	Available New Lairs	*Average Annual Interment Numbers (Burials & Re- openings)	Average New Lair Numbers Required	Lair Capacity in Years
Bent Cemetery	1728	183	74	23
Biggar Cemetery	149	20	6	25
Carlisle Wilton Cemetery	42	72	16	3
Carmichael Cemetery	62	2	1	62
Carnwath Cemetery	250	38	10	25
Carstairs Avenue Road Cemetery	3	11	3	1
Carstairs Cemetery	0	1	0	Nil
Chapelton Cemetery	14	3	1	14
Coulter Cemetery/Churchyard	16	2	1	16
Covington Cemetery and Churchyard	0	2	0	Nil
Crawford/Kirkton Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
Crawfordjohn Cemetery/Churchyard	88	2	1	88
Dolphinton Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
Douglas Cemetery	58	19	4	15
Douglas St Brides	0	0	0	Nil
Dunsyre Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
East Kilbride Cemetery	0	35	0	Nil
Elvanfoot Churchyard and Extension	54	3	1	54
Glassford Cemetery	47	5	1	47
Glebe Cemetery	359	20	8	45
High Blantyre Cemetery	0	23	0	Nil
Lamington Cemetery	116	1	1	116
Lanark Cemetery	0	47	0	Nil
Larkhall Cemetery	68	92	23	3
Leadhills Cemetery	5	2	1	5
Lesmahagow Cemetery	112	75	23	5
Libberton Cemetery	1	1	1	1
Pettinain Cemetery	3	2	1	3
Phillipshill Cemetery * with extension of 1117	91	161	68	1
Priestfield Cemetery	44	134	48	1
Roberton Cemetery	41	1	1	41
Rutherglen Cemetery	30	88	25	1
Springbank Cemetery	329	27	9	37
Stonehouse Cemetery /St Ninians	0	5	0	Nil
Strathaven Cemetery	0	37	0	Nil
Symington Cemetery	14	2	1	14
Symington St. John's Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
Walston Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
West Cemetery	0	0	0	Nil
Westburn Cemetery	293	36	12	24
Wilsontown Cemetery	0	1	0	Nil
Wiston Cemetery	7	1	1	7
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE AREA AVAILABILITY	4024	1154	342	12
Churchyards				
Bothwell St Brides Churchyard	0	4	0	Nil
Cambuslang Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Carlisle Old Cemetery and St Lukes	0	0	0	Nil
Dalserf Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
East Kilbride Old Parish Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Hamilton Old Parish Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
High Blantyre Old Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Lesmahagow Old Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Quaker's Burial Ground Chapelton	0	0	0	Nil
Quothquan Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Rutherglen Old Parish Churchyard	0	0	0	Nil
Private Cemetery /Churchyard				
Poor Clare Monastery,Bothwell				
Lanark St Marys				

- 4.7. On-going land provision is becoming more difficult to source as available land use changes for community requirements as well as the suitability of land to be used for burials. Therefore, the Council is required to achieve maximum land use throughout the Council area and within our existing cemeteries, whilst maintaining our legal obligation to provide burial ground.
- 4.8. A key aim of the Council's strategic approach to cemetery provision is establishing catchment groupings in relation to their geographical location within the authority area. This approach will allow an area-base measurement of lair availability and usage within each catchment, providing appropriate medium and long-term burial provision within communities.
- 4.9. Proposed South Lanarkshire Cemetery Catchments showing cemeteries within that catchment is shown below:

	Hamilton/ Blantyre	East Kilbride	Cambuslang /Rutherglen	Strathaven	Larkhall/ Stonehouse
	Bent	East Kilbride	Rutherglen	Chapelton	Glebe*
	Priestfield	Philipshill (+extension)	Westburn	Glassford	Larkhall
	West			Strathaven	Stonehouse
	High Blantyre			Glebe*	
New lairs available	1772	1208	323	150	338
Average new lairs	122	68	37	4	29
Capacity (Years)	14.52	17.76	8.73	37.5	11.6

*Glebe cemetery has capacity to serve both Strathaven and Larkhall/ Stonehouse areas.

Clydesdale						
Catch A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G
Carnwath	Carluke	Carmichael	Biggar	Douglas	Lamington	Crawford/ Kirkton
Dolphinton	Lanark	Carstairs	Coulter	Douglas St Brides	Roberton	Crawfordjohn
Dunsyre	Springbank	Carstairs Avenue Road	Symington	Lesmahagow	Wiston	Elvanfoot
Walston		Covington	Symington St Johns			Leadhills
Wilsontown		Libberton				
		Pettinain				
New lairs available	250	371	69	179	170	164
Average new lairs	10	25	6	8	27	3
Capacity (Years)	25.00	14.84	11.50	22.38	6.30	54.67

- 4.10. Work is also underway or anticipated in the future to increase capacity in the following cemeteries;
- Philipshill cemetery extension is expected to be completed by March 2024 providing an additional 1,117 new lairs.
 - Planning permission has been received for an extension at Douglas cemetery to provide an additional 391 new lairs. As there is sufficient capacity in the catchment currently, it is proposed to begin work on the extension in 2-3 years.
 - Springbank Cemetery has the potential maximum capacity of 8,000 lairs within the Councils existing land ownership. This will require enabling infrastructure at the appropriate time to increase capacity.

- 4.11. The Council will also undertake two new areas of work to increase new lair provision within our existing cemeteries. The first will see a pro-active approach to recovering underutilised space within individual cemeteries.
- 4.12. Recent work in this area has identified the potential creation of 28 new lairs within Strathaven Cemetery. Similar investigatory work in Rutherglen Cemetery has identified potentially 65-70 new lairs and a further 100 at Philipshill. A programme of work will now be developed to identify further opportunities to increase new lair capacity from existing cemetery provision.
- 4.13. Furthermore, within the legislative framework Councils have the powers to reclaim burial ground for which the right of burial has been purchased in advance and where no interments have taken place over a period of time. Within the Councils current policy this period of time is 40 years, however this is believed to be too short a timeframe. It is proposed to increase the period of inactivity to 60 years and the Council will now begin the legal process to reclaim lairs unused after this timeframe or longer.
- 4.14. The catchment with the shortest capacity in years is Group E (Douglas & Lesmahagow) with a capacity of 6.3 years. As outlined in section 4.10, an extension is planned at Douglas Cemetery that will increase catchment capacity by a further 14 years. The catchment approach and the work identified in 4.8 and 4.9 suggest that there are no immediate concerns around new burial capacity in South Lanarkshire. It is proposed that capacity will now be formally reviewed every 5 years. Each review process will consider whether existing provision is adequate based on current trends and whether further extensions or new provision is required.

5. Cemetery Rules and Areas for Development

- 5.1. The Cemetery Rules and Regulations are the basis for the management of cemeteries. They enable the public, funeral directors, and memorial masons to understand the rules that the Council applies within all Council Cemeteries. In addition, Council Officers follow these rules and regulations to ensure the cemeteries are managed and operated in a common sense, practical and sympathetic manner. The following areas are covered within our Rules and Regulations.

- Layouts of cemeteries and designation of plots
- Rights of Burial
- Burials
- Memorialisation
- Preparation of lairs
- Register of burials
- Charges and Fees

5.2. Cemetery Charges and Fees

5.2.1. Fees and charges are reviewed and set annually and linked to the need for investment in our cemeteries to meet the needs of our bereaved and wider community.

5.2.2. All fees and charges will be determined by balancing what is a reasonable charge and the cost of managing and operating the cemeteries.

5.3. Memorial Mason Registration Scheme

5.3.1. Bereavement Services are responsible for the management of headstone placement within our cemeteries. As a burial authority we have a duty of care for the safety of both visitors and staff to any cemetery.

- 5.3.2. To meet this duty of care in 2015, a Memorial Mason Registration Scheme was set up whereby memorial masons would require register with South Lanarkshire Council prior to them carrying out any works within our cemeteries. This registration allows the service to check that memorial masons carry out works within our guidance; that their work conforms to the appropriate standard, and that they have the appropriate public liability insurance.
- 5.3.3. In order meet our duty of care the Council conducts a headstone safety check as part of a rolling five-year programme in all our cemeteries. In doing so advance notice is given to the public and councillors of the programme, whilst reporting the actions that we take and those a family may require to take, following a headstone being deemed unsafe.

5.4. Rights of Burial

- 5.4.1. Presently the Council permits the purchase of burial plots in advance in a limited number of cemeteries. This has been further restricted following the Covid-19 pandemic, however it is proposed to cease this practice and only allow purchase of plots at the time of need. This will help ensure the effective management of capacity within each catchment.
- 5.4.2. The Council understands families may not want a traditional type of coffin or burial and therefore we will explore alternative options such as sustainable and woodland burials and environmentally friendly coffins, such as wicker or cardboard. Current burial practice allows for the interments of full (coffin) and ashes interments.
- 5.4.3. The Council is committed to working with religious, ethnic, and culturally diverse groups to provide a range of burial options that meet the needs of our community. Currently the Council provides dedicated burial areas as detailed below.
- Chinese community in Priestfield Cemetery
 - Coptic Orthodox Church in Bent Cemetery
 - Muslim community in Bent Cemetery (the Muslim faith also requires, where possible, for a burial to take place within 24 hours of death).
- 5.4.4. Current procedures allow for the termination of the right of burial in lairs which have not been used for 40 years. However, it is proposed to extend this to a period of 60 years to ensure a more appropriate time has elapsed.
- 5.4.5. The process of terminating the rights of burial requires a letter to be issued to the registered lair owner at the address held on record to advise on the intention. There is also a further requirement to place adverts in two national newspapers and two local newspapers asking for any lair holder to come forward. It is anticipated this process will take 18 – 24 months to complete and will target the following cemeteries in the first phase:
- Strathaven
 - Rutherglen
 - East Kilbride
 - Lesmahagow

6.0 Cemetery Infrastructure and Maintenance

6.1. The Council acknowledges that the appearance of cemeteries can be enhanced by good maintenance which is in keeping with a peaceful and respectful environment. Maintenance of cemeteries is provided by Grounds Services with cemetery staff specially trained due to the nature of the work activities such as grave digging and liaising with bereaved families. Duties included in this role are:

- Digging graves
- Assisting interments
- Cutting graves
- Weeding and borders
- Topping up of graves
- Cleaning and tidying up
- Inspection of approved Memorial works
- Testing of Memorials and Headstones

6.2. The Council is also responsible for the ongoing and long-term maintenance of associated infrastructures within cemeteries such as roads, footpaths and walls. Given the age of many of our cemeteries, the maintenance requirements are increasing year on year. Many of the boundary walls around our churchyards both in urban and rural areas are deteriorating with some cemeteries having sections closed or barriered off.

6.3. The Council has allocated funding in the Capital Programme for new cemeteries, extensions and infrastructure. This funding will be aligned with existing commitments and proposals outlined in the strategy:

- Completion of Philipshill cemetery extension
- Douglas cemetery extension
- Enabling infrastructure for the recovery of space within existing cemeteries
- Ongoing infrastructure maintenance of roads, footpaths and walls

6.4. It is anticipated that further funding may be required following the 5-year capacity review process if further capacity is required in the current cemeteries with expansion capability (Springbank) or if new areas are identified as part of the process. The headstone inspection and stabilisation programme has been supported by annual allocations from the Councils capital programme. The service will continue to bid for funding through this annual process to support this ongoing programme of work.

7.0 Cemetery Strategy Short, Medium, and Long-Term

7.1. Short Term Strategy

- Catchment capacity to be reviewed every 5 years.
- Ceasing the pre-selling of lairs with any ownership only available at time of need to protect our legal requirements.
- Complete extension at Philipshill Cemetery providing over 1000 new lairs.
- Re-evaluate our existing cemeteries to recover underutilised space for new lairs and smaller ashes only lairs
- Begin first phase process of terminating rights on lairs that have not been used after a period of 60 years

7.2. Medium Term Strategy

- Douglas extension
- Explore options for the provision of alternative burial provision including woodland burial sites
- Modernise and improve IT systems to provide better data for the service enabling more effective reporting of performance.
- Reduce paper-based systems and replace with electronic systems including handheld devices for front line staff.
- Update lair maps in all cemeteries
- Review charges in line with benchmarking of comparator authorities
- Progress a workforce plan to ensure continuity of services
- Continue headstone inspection programme

7.3. Long Term Strategy

- Complete a Bereavement Strategy incorporating all elements of the service including Crematorium provision.
- Undertake the first 5-year review of cemetery catchment capacity
- Develop proposals for infrastructure investment (roads, footpaths, walls)
- Work with religious, ethnic, and culturally diverse groups to provide a range of burial and cremation options that meet the needs of our community.
- Implement a Memorial Mason Registration Scheme