

Membership Newsletter

Reuse of Graves – Letter to the Minister

At a recent meeting of the Burial & Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG) convened by the Ministry of Justice, representatives from bereavement related organisation were informed that burial law reform and the reuse of graves is not high on the government's agenda. This news was met with the disappointment of the majority of representatives.

Those present were however informed that any person or organisation is free to write directly to the Minister to convey their disappointment and urge government action.

To this end the board of directors has forwarded a letter (text below) to the Minister and would encourage all professional and corporate members of the Institute that are concerned with the shortage of burial space to forward their own letters. Note that Members in Scotland can write to their First Minister on the similar situation that exists in Scotland.

*Jonathan Djanogly MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA*

June 2012

Dear Sir,

Burial Law Reform and the Reuse of Graves

At a recent meeting of the Burial & Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG) convened by the Ministry of Justice, representatives from the various organisations were informed that the review of burial law is not a high priority for the government at the present time. On receipt of this news a large number of those representatives present expressed their disappointment.

The widely reported shortage of new burial space in the UK is at a crisis point in some areas with this situation inevitably being realised by an increasing number of authorities ranging from unitary to parish councils.

In April 2001 the Select Committee Inquiry into Cemeteries recommended the following: "A complete review of the law relating to burial and cemetery management, including churchyards, is required" and "If the public are to continue to have access to affordable, accessible burial in cemeteries fit for the needs of the bereaved, there appears to be no alternative to grave reuse".

Since that time the BCAG has worked on a scheme for the sensitive and selective reuse of old abandoned graves only for the initiative to be shelved and not placed back on the government's agenda. The Institute is concerned that ultimately those bereaved people that choose burial will be seriously affected by the lack of action and the ever diminishing 'local, affordable burial' provision.

The unsustainable nature of cemeteries, the cost of acquiring land on which to establish new cemeteries and maintenance costs relating to additional cemeteries add to the problem and certainly have an effect on fees and charges made to the bereaved. Sustainable and reusable cemeteries are void of these problems and would ultimately save public money.

Whilst limited reuse legislation is available to London authorities the Institute and its members would wish to see the introduction of adequate, national, and modern burial legislation.

The Institute would urge the government to revisit this serious issue in order that burial authorities may continue to properly serve the bereaved.

Yours sincerely,