

ICCM Charter for the Bereaved choosing Natural Burial – Guiding Principles

Caring for the Community

All burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the entire bereavement experience occurs without error or insensitivity, and that it meets the religious, secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved.

The service shall comply with all statutory and health and safety requirements. It should also comply with the Ministry of Justice's guidance for Natural Burial Ground operators.

Service sensitivity

The burial of a human body is a highly emotive occasion for those taking part. Each burial ground must be managed to create and maintain an atmosphere of solace and respect throughout the entire proceedings. The sensitivity must extend to all staff and contractors working at facilities, through the application of bereavement sensitive specifications.

Charter adoptees will respond sympathetically to individual funeral needs and shall give a justifiable reason for refusing any specific request.

Staff

All staff should possess qualifications and undergo recognised training specific to their duties. The following should be seen as minimum requirements:

Grounds staff – Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (various courses)

Office staff – ICCM Diploma administration unit

Managers/owners – ICCM Certificate in the Management of Natural Burial Grounds

Senior management (where appropriate) should possess or be working towards the full ICCM diploma.

The appointment of all staff must emphasise the need for proper conduct and demeanour, as well as technical expertise. Staff must speak and act in a manner that recognises the sensitivity of bereavement, both during and outside working hours. They must not accept gratuities.

Flexibility in working times and practices may be essential in providing a properly run service. Terms and conditions of employment should reflect this.

All staff should be identifiable by name badges.

Environmental Issues

The majority of the bereaved choosing Natural Burial and of those providing it will be doing so because they are supportive of environmentally practice. Charter adoptees will be transparently

clear about all of their practises and how these may affect the environment, whether this be positively or negatively.

They will be clear about the objectives for their facility and how this will be managed in the long term; this means both environmentally and financially. They will seek to lower the environmental impact of their service over time where possible.

They will positively promote the greater use of earth friendly materials and practices. They will avoid creating water borne pollution for their facilities.

Individual disposal

The importance of human beings as individuals and the manner in which they inter-relate with relatives and friends does not diminish in significance following death. It is important for the bereaved to know that the burial is individually carried out, and the following requirements must, therefore, be met:-

- i) No coffin/container/shroud shall be accepted at a cemetery unless the name of the deceased therein is clearly shown.
- ii) The identity shown on the coffin/container/shroud shall be verified at every funeral.
- iii) The body and its coffin/container/shroud shall be placed in an identified grave.
- iv) If requested by the Applicant for Burial the lid of the coffin or container may be removed for the duration of a funeral service and subsequently replaced prior to the committal (This action cannot be permitted in cases where cause of death is a notifiable disease).
- v) After the coffin/container/shroud and body have been committed into the grave, they shall not be removed or otherwise disturbed except for lawful exhumation, by Ministry of Justice licence and/or faculty or by the order of a Coroner.
- vi) Immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work will be completed on the day of the burial and must not extend overnight. If mourners wish to backfill some or all of the grave themselves they must be provided with clean tools; the process must be supervised by a trained member of staff.

Inspection

Everyone has the right to inspect the burial ground cemetery during normal working hours, upon application to the manager of the facility.

The ICCM Guiding Principles will be regularly reviewed, and updated where appropriate, to ensure that they remain relevant and meet the changing needs of the bereaved, the environment and the society in which we all live.