

Holding Over

Developed Guidelines from Stakeholder Organisations

Introduction

At a meeting on 17th June 2011, facilitated by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the subject of Crematoria holding over cremations was discussed by representatives of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA), the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM), the Association of Private Crematoria & Cemeteries (APCC) and the Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB). The meeting was convened in response to an adverse newspaper article about the practice of holding over cremations by some Cremation Authorities. The aforementioned organisations are recognised by the MoJ as the stakeholder organisations that oversee and support the crematoria and cemetery sectors.

At the meeting the majority of stakeholder organisations agreed in principle that the practice of holding over is acceptable in some circumstances, but that there should be a single set of guidelines for it.

Subsequently the stakeholder organisations met and consulted among themselves, taking into consideration current guidelines set down by the FBCA and ICCM, (the Code of Cremation Practice and Guiding Principles for the Charter for the Bereaved respectively). The organisations have agreed to a set of guiding principles.

The practice of holding over cremations is not unlawful and has been followed throughout England, Scotland and Wales for a number of years. Whether to hold over or not is a matter for individual Cremation Authorities, who may take into account factors such as a reduction in cremation numbers or a change in working practices.

Guiding Principles

1. Standard Principle. If a Cremation Authority wishes to hold a cremation over from the day the coffin is received at the crematorium and/or the funeral service takes place it must observe Principle 3 following.

2. Environmental Impact. Cremation Authorities are encouraged to minimise the environmental impact of cremations where practicable to do so. Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) from fossil fuels is emitted from cremators during the cremation process. The CO₂ emissions are harmful to the environment and are at their highest when a cremator is in pre-heat mode. In order to ensure that cremators are used in the most efficient and least environmentally detrimental way a Cremation Authority may decide not to cremate on the same day as the coffin is received and/or the funeral service is held.

3. Holding Over. A Cremation Authority wishing to hold a cremation (or cremations) over must comply with the following conditions:

a) It must not do so where the Applicant for Cremation insists on the cremation being carried out on the day that the coffin is received at the crematorium and/or the funeral service takes place.

b) Written consent must always be obtained from the Applicant or their authorised representative where the Cremation Authority practices planned holding over. The method for obtaining written consent is not prescribed but can be decided by the Cremation Authority.

If holding over becomes necessary due to mechanical failure, then In these circumstances the Cremation Authority should inform the Applicant via the funeral director and either gain consent to hold over until the fault is repaired or to allow cremation at an alternative crematorium. If this situation occurs outside of normal operating hours, then it may be considered impracticable under such circumstances to obtain the consent of the Applicant and therefore holding over should be arranged as a temporary solution.

Appendix A Holding Over Guidance

c) The period for which a cremation may be held over is to be determined by prevailing circumstances. Cremation Authorities should defer to their Principal Trade Organisation if uncertain; i.e. FBCA, ICCM, APCC.

The crematorium must have appropriate storage conditions for holding over; i.e. secure and sanitary.