

Policy Committee – 9th June 2015

Introduction of Holding Over at Skipton Crematorium



Report of Director of Services

Ward(s) affected: All

1. **Purpose of Report** –

To consider the introduction of the Holding Over of coffins at Skipton Crematorium, increasing the efficient use of resources and reducing CO2 emissions.

2. **Recommendations** – Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the implementation of the Holding Over of coffins at Skipton Crematorium as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 Approve the changes in fees as set out in 5.1 of the report to be introduced with effect from 1st September 2015.
- 2.3 Approve the introduction of 2 none service time slots with a reduction in fees as set out in 5.3 of the report to be introduced with effect from 1st September 2015.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Craven Bereavement Services has two functional cremators and currently offers ten daily service times at 40 minute intervals, 09:00 - 15:00, five days a week (50 service times available per week). Booking times are not restricted.
- 3.2 The current practice is to cremate coffins on the same day as received, regardless of the number of services booked. Gas cost ranges from £26.00 to £39.00 per cremation with regular monitoring showing it is more efficient to carry out as many cremations as possible through a single cremator in one day if timings allow.
- 3.3 However it is not always possible to use a single cremator and two cremators are often required to cremate all coffins on the day received. For information Table 1 below indicates the annual number of cremations over the past 5 years.

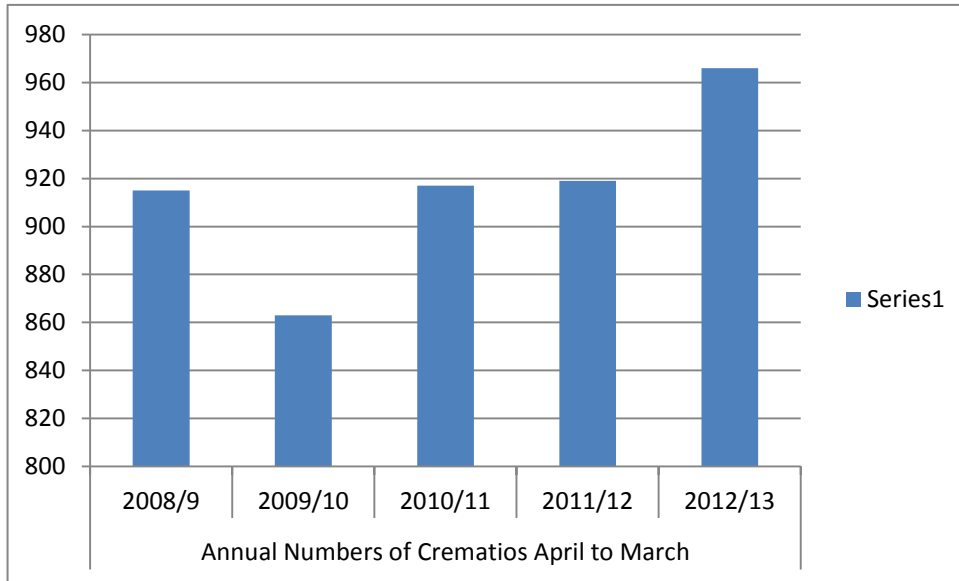


Table 1

3.4 Table 2 below shows the average number of cremations per week, based on a 12 week period on current bookings. The table shows the average number of cremations as 18 per week, 78 per month.

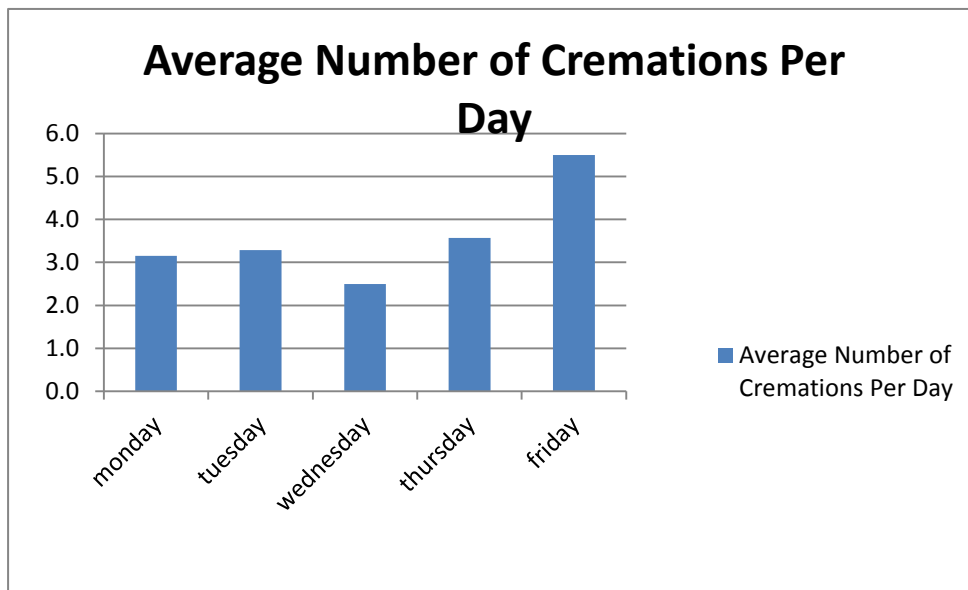


Table 2

3.5 With the current policy to cremate on the same day, and on days when there is only one or two services/coffins booked in, gas consumption and the release of CO² into the atmosphere are high on a usage to efficiency ratio. NB: CO² emissions are at their highest when a cremator is in its pre-heat mode. On current operating arrangements therefore, the cremation process is inefficient in terms of use of gas and minimising CO² emissions.

4. Holding Over

- 4.1 The process of 'Holding Over' allows Cremation Authorities to minimise the environmental impact of cremations where it is practicable to do so. Under a 'Holding Over' process once a coffin is received at the crematorium, it can be held over in a secure place to await cremation, as long as the applicant has given written consent to do so. A UK crematoria survey carried out in 2014 indicates approximately 46 per cent of crematoriums currently hold over. The 'Holding Over' process is explained in detail in guidance at Appendix A
- 4.2 Certain regulations and processes are required to be adhered to or recommended if the practice of holding over was to be introduced, these include:
- The applicant must give their written consent.
 - Coffins to be held over for a maximum period of 72 hours.
 - Coffins to be cremated on the next planned operational cremating day, subject to the above, in order of sequence received, to achieve maximum efficiency, and environmental benefits e.g. reductions in CO² emissions.
 - Transparency of holding over information for the public e.g. published on the website and in appropriate written literature.
 - The crematorium should have appropriate storage conditions for holding over i.e. secure and sanitary.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of the Cremation Authority to consider the number of cremations booked on a daily basis and organise the cremations through one cremator where possible.
- 4.4 Table 4 below shows actual examples of gas usage comparisons for four cremations using a) one cremator and b) two cremator machines. It illustrates a gas usage reduction of 9388 cubic feet when using just one cremator:

a) Gas usage based on one machine			
Day	Date	Number of Cremations	Gas used (cubic feet)
Thursday	14/08/2014	4	8475
Wednesday	20/08/2014	4	9047
Tuesday	09/09/2014	4	8335
		Average	8619
b) Gas usage based on two machines			
Day	Date	Number of Cremations	Gas used (cubic Feet)
Monday	18/08/2014	4	19000
Wednesday	01/10/2014	4	18756
Friday	03/10/2014	4	16267
		Average	18007
		Difference	9388

Table 3

- 4.5 By introducing 'Holding Over' CO2 emissions and the use of gas can be reduced by up to 25% depending on the number of cremations that are held over. Paragraph 7.1.4 of this report provides worked examples of cremations on a holding over basis based on the average 78 cremations per month.
- 4.6 A consultation exercise on proposals to introduce 'Holding Over' has been undertaken with Funeral Directors, Ministers, staff and Craven District Councillors and generally there were no objections to introducing the policy. The feedback received from the consultation undertaken did request it should be Craven District Council's responsibility to establish whether a coffin is held over. The Council will accept its responsibility as set out in the Holding Over Guidance at 3 (b) which requires '*written consent must always be obtained from the applicant or their authorised representative*'.
- 4.7 From the written consultation there have been responses from 12 Ministers out of 51 letters sent out, 3 Funeral Directors out of 46 letters sent and 2 from the 30 District Councillors. A summary of responses received is included in Appendix C.
- 4.8 In addition, a consultation meeting with Funeral Directors has been held as the professional grouping that could be most affected by the potential introduction of holding over. All representatives present at the meeting felt that if the Council approved the introduction of holding over, that this should be stated as such on the applicant consent form with an opt out tick box rather than it being a specific question to be asked by the Funeral Director when making funeral arrangements with the applicant.
- 4.9 If a 'Holding Over' policy is introduced the additional storage requirements can be accommodated without modifications as there is sufficient space for 4 coffins to be stored. However, it is recommended that the current coffin rack be altered so that an insulation skin can be attached to the frame with a cool unit attached if required, giving an overall current capacity for holding over 3 coffins at a time, which would be sufficient in the short to medium term.

5. Cremation Fees

- 5.1 It is recommended that the reduction in gas usage and CO2 emissions is reflected by a differential in the fees charged for a Holding Over and a same day cremation. The fee differential has been arrived at using the difference in gas costs between a cremation held over (£25.00) and highest cost of gas of a coffin not held over (£39.00). The proposed fee structure is provided in table 4 below:

Service type	Current Fee (£)	Proposed Fee (£)
Cremation same day	615	629
Cremation held over	N/A	615
Saturday Cremation same day	1541	1541
Saturday Cremation held over	1209	1209

Table 4

- 5.2 Witnessed charging would be exempt from the additional fee for cremating on the same day (this responds to the Councillor query regarding requirements to cremate on the same day for religious reasons received during consultation)
- 5.3 The current fees have been benchmarked to neighbouring crematoria (table 5) and even with the increase in fee to £629 for not holding over Craven Council's fees still represent good value when compared with other service providers. Additional Craven's fees were the 17th lowest in the 2014 table of fees at 217 crematoriums nationally.

Comparison of Cremation Fees						
Year	Craven	Burnley	Leeds	Bradford	Harrogate	Blackburn
2014	595.00	598.00	748.00	636.00	738.00	605.00
2015	615.00	610.00	778.00	650.00	764.00	633.00

Table 5

- 5.4 In response to requests from Funeral Directors it is also proposed alterations are made to the service time options for the early morning none service slots. Currently service times start at 9am with none service bookings within the day time service slots and charged at full service rate i.e. £615. It is proposed two additional none service times are introduced at 8.40am and at 8.50 am. It is proposed that fee reductions be introduced for these two new time slots of £460. Offering these two additional early morning none service slots would allow for full service times to be better utilised for services and provide additional choice/price options to the client.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

Expenditure required to introduce holding over is set out in table 6 below and can be met within the 2015/16 revenue budget:

Expenditure	£
Technology (IPad and Software)	800
Insulation Skin	5,000
Total	5,800

Table 6

It is impossible to state the exact level of efficiency savings that will be made from the introduction of holding over as it is dependent on the number of cremations and the take up of 'Holding Over' however, table 7 below provides estimate assumptions based on two different scenarios on the average 78 cremations per month, one assuming 30 coffins are held over, the second 10 coffins.

Example 1 – holding over of 30 coffins			
	Current Policy i.e. no holding over option (Fee £615 x 78 cremations, average gas cost £40.25 per cremation)	If Holding Over introduced (Fee 30 x £615 at average gas cost £40.25 per cremation and 48 x £629, average gas cost £19.25)	Savings (1 month)
Gas cost (average £40.25 per cremation)	£3,139	£2,131	(£1008)
Cremation fees income	(£47,970)	(£48,642)	(£672)
Total			(£1680)
Example 2 – holding over of 10 coffins			
	Baseline (current – no holding over)	If Holding Over introduced (Fee 10 x £615 at average gas cost £40.25 per cremation and 68 x £629, average gas cost £19.25)	Savings (1 month)
Gas cost	£3,139	£2929	(£210)
Cremation fees income	(£47,970)	(£48,922)	(£952)
Total			(£1,162)

Table 7

The full year saving if Holding Over is introduced would be £13,944. Other potential savings could be made through the introduction of holding over including the regularity for cremator re-lining i.e. cremator lining lives would be extended reducing the level of expenditure on replacement.

- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – The Council is following the guiding principles set down in the ‘Holding Over Guidance’ issued by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities in 2011.

7 **Contribution to Corporate Priorities**

Greener Craven; The introduction of holding over would form the second part in the development plan for the energy and cost reduction strategy for the service, which will play a key role in reducing the crematoriums carbon footprint, as demonstrated through the various worked examples included within this report.

Financial Resilience through savings that can be achieved through energy consumption reductions and increased life expectancy of cremator liners.

8. **Risk Management** –

- 8.1 A number of mitigation measures are already in place with further recommendations made by insurers to be implemented in relation to the use of software for controlling cremators e.g. auto stop. The use of auto stop would be carefully monitored to ensure safe practices are adhered to.
- 8.2 The holding over of coffins is a very sensitive subject and the implementation of such will require sensitive handling during its implementation phase and thereafter. Good practice and lessons learned will be picked up from other crematoriums that have already implemented holding over.
9. **Consultations with Others** –
- Funeral Directors
 - Ministers
 - Bereavement Services Staff
 - Craven District Councillors
- 10 **Equality Impact Assessment** – An equality impact assessment has identified the need to ensure there is no differential in charges where a coffin cannot be held over for religious reasons.
11. **Access to Information : Background Documents** - None
12. **Author of the Report** – Hazel Smith, Asset & Project Manager, 01756 706301; hsmith@cravenc.gov.uk
- Note : Members of CLT are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.
13. **Appendices** –
- Appendix A – Holding Over Guidance
 - Appendix B – Example Consultation Letter
 - Appendix C – Consultation Feedback Summary