

Meeting of the Environment & Leisure Committee
Monday 7 July 2025

Agenda Item 7.2

**TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE PROVISION OF FUTURE BURIAL SPACE AT
SNATTS ROAD CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL INSPECTIONS**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 At the Environment and Leisure Committee on 14 April 2025, members had agreed to the proposal by the Chair to consecrate fifty percent of the new Y-section (north side of the cemetery) with the view to adding further consecrated ground if required.
- 1.2 Members were keen to understand and accommodate the burial practices and consecration rituals for all local faith groups.
- 1.3 Staff also looked into the ecological aspects involving any legal requirements for burial space within and surrounding ancient woodlands.

2.0 Feedback from local faith groups

- 2.1 The Senior leader of King's Church expressed no dealings in the categories of consecrated and non-consecrated ground, although he believed that some of the more traditional churches in the town may have a view.
- 2.2 The Rector of Holy Cross Church was very pleased that a new section of the cemetery was being consecrated and referred this request to the Archdeacon of Brighton and Lewes (currently overseeing this area) and the Bishops of Chichester and Lewes for any further views. The Bishops' Council meeting was held on 24th June, although there has been no feedback to date.
- 2.3 The Deacon of Cornerstone Church had not yet been in contact with leaders from any other faith groups in Uckfield, although being a Methodist Deacon she felt that it was good in her opinion that there will be such land available for non-Christians.
- 2.4 The Head Groundsman has also provided an additional summary of religious burial practices and consecration rituals (excluding Christianity) – see App A.
- 2.5 While each religion has distinct burial customs, several themes recur, including consecration through prayer or ritual carried out by a religious leader at the time of a burial.
- 2.6 As previously agreed, arrangements will be made for the consecration of land within the Y-section to ensure equal land for burials and ashes for all faiths.

3.0 Burial sites - nature and ecology

- 3.1 The formal controls in relation to root protection of trees surrounding ancient woodlands are really confined just to development.
- 3.2 The land on the south side of the road dates back to 1884 and that the cemetery on the north side was added in 1942 (first burial in the north side was Grave U1 on 20th September 1951). The 'Y' land was a little less clear, although the Development Manager for Planning and Environment Services at Wealden

suggested that it was purchased in the 1980s and has been part of the cemetery since that time and clearly maintained in excess of ten years and designated for cemetery use in the future. The proximity of the ancient woodland will therefore not be an issue in this regard for the local planning authority, nor one that they will have any control over.

3.3 The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) also advised that there was no strict legal requirement in relation to distance of burials from trees.

3.4 However, Wealden DC did mention that there could be potential issues and delays with requests for burial grounds within ancient woodlands (re Paygate Wood).

4.0 Requests to use ancient woodlands as burial sites

4.1 This might not technically be development, but it could constitute change of use which might require permission in its own right, which could then lead to consideration using the planning (NPPF/Standing Advice) framework for ancient woodlands. In terms of impacts, the concerns might not just be about physical tree and root damage but would also extend to the disruption of ancient woodland soils as well.

4.2 The cemetery on the northern side of Snatts Road is completely surrounded by ancient woodland (including Paygate Wood which is partly owned by the Town Council), and it was appreciated the difficulties the Town Council might face with any future expansion plans into ancient woodland.

5.0 Memorial inspections

5.1 Further to the recent memorial training, a member of the Grounds team is carrying out memorial checks with the cemetery. These are being carried out section by section, starting with the oldest and most recent first so that if any issues occur with newer memorials, these can be sorted out under warranty, if necessary.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to note the report and to provide any comments prior to arrangements being made for the consecration of land.

Contact Officer: Rachel Newton



Religious Burial Practices and Consecration Rituals (Excluding Christianity)

It is essential for Uckfield Town Council to understand and accommodate the diverse religious needs of its community within its cemetery. Respecting the burial traditions of different faiths—such as timely interments, orientation of graves, or prohibitions against cremation—ensures that all residents are treated with dignity in accordance with their beliefs. By fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, the council not only upholds human rights and religious freedoms but also strengthens trust and cohesion within the local community.

1. Islam

Burial Requirements:

- Burial must occur as soon as possible after death, ideally within 24 hours.
- The body is washed (Ghusl) by same-sex relatives or community members.
- Shrouded in plain white cloth—three pieces for men, five for women.
- Buried on the right side, facing Mecca (Qibla).
- Simple, unornamented headstones preferred; cremation is prohibited.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Special funeral prayer (Janazah) performed before burial.
- Three-day mourning period; widows observe four months and ten days (Iddah).
- Charitable acts on behalf of the deceased encouraged.

2. Judaism

Burial Requirements:

- Burial ideally within 24 hours, unless delayed by Sabbath or law.
- Body is washed and purified by Chevra Kadisha.
- Dressed in simple white linen shrouds (Tachrichim).
- Unadorned wooden coffin with no metal parts used.
- Body laid flat; positioning may vary by sect.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Kaddish prayer recited by close family for 11 months.

- Seven-day mourning period (Shiva).
- Annual remembrance (Yahrzeit) with candle lighting and prayers.

3. Hinduism

Burial Requirements:

- Cremation is standard; burial is rare and reserved for specific cases.
- Body is bathed, dressed, and laid on a pyre.
- Eldest son typically performs the last rites.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Ashes scattered in sacred rivers, often the Ganges.
- Shraddha and Pind Daan rituals involve food offerings.
- Thirteen-day mourning followed by one-year observance.

4. Buddhism

Burial Requirements:

- Cremation is common, though burial is also practiced.
- Monks may chant to guide the deceased's consciousness.
- Body often left undisturbed after death.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- 49-day rituals help the soul navigate the bardo (intermediate state).
- Food, incense, and donations offered in memory.
- Annual memorials held depending on tradition.

5. Sikhism

Burial Requirements:

- Cremation is preferred; burial used only when required.
- Body is bathed, dressed, and adorned with articles of faith.
- Embalming generally avoided.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Akhand Path (continuous scripture reading) may be done.
- Kirtan Sohila hymns are recited.
- Communal meal (Langar) often served post-ritual.

6. Zoroastrianism

Burial Requirements:

- Traditionally, sky burial in Towers of Silence used.
- Modern practices include cremation or burial in lined graves.

- Body exposed to sacred dog (Sagdid) to ward off evil.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Avesta prayers recited over four days.
- Sacred fire maintained for purification and protection.

7. Jainism

Burial Requirements:

- Cremation is standard practice.
- Body handled minimally to respect Ahimsa (non-violence).
- No embalming or cosmetic treatment.

Consecration/Post-Burial Rituals:

- Reflection on detachment and liberation.
- No public mourning; focus on soul's journey and karma.

Conclusion

While each religion has distinct burial customs, several themes recur:

- Respect for the body, whether through burial, cremation, or sky burial.
- Consecration through prayer or ritual, often invoking peace for the departed soul.
- Timely handling of the body in accordance with sacred texts.
- A focus on spiritual purity and non-attachment, especially in Dharmic faiths.

Understanding these practices is essential for culturally sensitive engagement in diverse societies, particularly for those working in healthcare, social services, and funeral industries.