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It is a pleasure to bring you this last newsletter of 2023. The year has ended in another flurry of activity, this time in the form of an update from the Law Commission on their project looking at the laws surrounding burial, cremation and other funerary methods - and the Ministry of Justice's publication of draft guidance covering the statutory reforms with respect to medical examiners and medical referees. You can find more detail of both updates on pages 4 and 5 of this news update.

The Cremation Society ended 2023 with a recent trip to Northern Ireland - meeting the dedicated teams at Roselawn Crematorium and the newly opened Antrim and Newtownabbey Crematorium. We were warmly welcomed by both teams and were very appreciative of the time they gave to show us around both sites. We will include more news of that visit in the next newsletter.

After another busy year draws to a close, we would like to thank you for continuing to subscribe to this newsletter which we hope brings a convenient way to stay abreast of news and developments from across the cremation sector. We wish you every best wish for the festive period and we look forward to 2024 in which we will be celebrating our 150th anniversary - look out for more news of how we will be commemorating this significant milestone!

**Wendy Buchan**  
**Executive Officer & Secretary to The Cremation Society**

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Plans have been submitted for a new crematorium at **Castleton Park**. The site would serve bereaved families living between Cardiff and Newport with the aim of reducing journey times to funerals. Developer **Richard Evans** has submitted the plans for Castleton Park to Newport City Council following a “mixed response” from residents and a majority of opposition in the 250-person village of Michaelstone-y-Fedw. Six funeral director firms in the area, including J. Pidgeon and Son of Cardiff and Philip Tom and Sons of Pontymister, have “warmly welcomed” the proposed site. Following local feedback, the developer has proposed to widen Coalpit Lane, adding he was confident all “highway issues” could be resolved. Mr Evans has assured residents in Michaelstone-y-Fedw that funeral-goers will access the crematorium from the A48 rather than drive through their village. To read the full story, please visit the: [\*\*South Wales Argus website.\*\*](#)

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A major upgrade is needed at a Borders crematorium to meet the requirements of new legislation. A planning application has been submitted to Scottish Borders Council for a series of improvements at **Houndwood Crematorium**. The work would involve the installation of a new filtration system, the replacement of external coolers and alterations to a wall to allow the new filtration system the space to function. Houndwood Crematorium opened to the public in March 2015 and now has its own Garden of Remembrance where visitors can enjoy the solitude and reflect. Facilities also include a chapel with seating for 120 people. A report with the application says the proposed changes are “essential in the businesses function and statutory obligations to meet standards”. To read the full article, please visit the: [\*\*Border Telegraph website.\*\*](#)

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**Nene Valley Crematorium** has been given an excellence award from the Wellingborough and East Northants Chamber of Commerce. The accolade was presented for its continuing professional development support for team members and improvements to their working conditions, as well as enhancements towards customer experience for visitors, and donations to local charities. The crematorium in Doddington Road, Wellingborough is operated by **North Northants Council**. A spokesman said: “The modest team are beyond delighted to receive such a prestigious award and convey heartfelt thanks to the Chamber of Commerce judges for their recognition of the team’s commitment towards responsibilities and the variety of facilities offered at the crematorium.” For the full article, please go to the: [\*\*Northamptonshire Telegraph’s website.\*\*](#)

**Hemel Hempstead Crematorium** has been chosen as a finalist in the 2024 Civic Trust Awards, a scheme which celebrates great buildings and designs that are eco-friendly, easy for people to use, and make towns and cities better places to live. The awards, which recognise outstanding architectural and design achievements, have included the crematorium among the regional finalists, marking a significant acknowledgment of the building's attributes. The crematorium is owned and managed by **West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee**, which comprises of Watford Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City & District Council and Three Rivers District Council. The nomination highlights the crematorium's unique design elements and for providing a serene and inclusive space for mourners. The site is situated within the green belt south of Hemel Hempstead and has been designed to maximise natural light and scenic views, utilising the surrounding landscape as a poignant backdrop for the chapel. The crematorium team is due to find out on January 8th, 2024 if the facility has been named a national or international winner, or highly commended. To read the complete article, please visit the: [Watford Observer's website.](#)

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**Poole Crematorium's** chapel upgrade has been hailed by funeral directors and families. The facility, on Gravel Hill, now has comfy seating for more than 100 mourners, a covered space outside for those waiting for services and modern audio-visual capability. Funeral directors have said the addition of replacement cremators would make it the 'perfect' crematorium. Malcolm Green, from James Smith Funeral Directors in Swanage, said: "The refurbishment has made a huge difference. The interior has been beautifully and sensitively decorated and the new seats are very comfy. The tech is now up there with any similar facility and families can livestream a service on the internet and create their own visual tributes." Malcolm added that the access to the site is 'good', with plenty of car parking, and a bus stop. Staff are incredibly helpful and feedback from families has been excellent. One lady recently said to me that it was the best facility she had ever been to," he said. "We are hoping that cremators will be installed soon and that would make it perfect. To read the entire article, please go to: [Bournemouth Echo's website.](#)



## MINISTRY OF JUSTICE UPDATE

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has published **draft** regulations under section 19 (Medical Examiners), section 20 (Medical Certificate of Cause of Death) and section 21 (National Medical Examiner) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. A plain language document, explaining the Government's death certification reforms, can be found **[here](#)**.

The draft regulations and plain language document will help medical practitioners, registrars, coroners and the public understand how the new legal requirements will work and will help ensure frontline services are ready. The reforms will come into force from **April 2024** and will affect all healthcare providers, and medical practitioners who may be the attending practitioner when a person dies. They will put all of the medical examiner system's obligations, duties and responsibilities on to a statutory footing and ensure they are recognised by law. Once the death certification reforms come into force, all deaths in England and Wales will be independently reviewed, without exception, either by a medical examiner or a coroner. The Royal College of Pathologists will be holding an information event on **17th January 2024**. Details are available online at:

**[Death Certification Reforms Legislation – implications for the Medical Examiner system \(rcpath.org\)](#)**

Pages 6-7 of the plain language document set out the **impact of these changes for those working in burials and cremation**. Comments on DHSC's draft regulations can be sent directly to **DHSC**. MOJ are also, separately, working to amend the guidance listed below to reflect the changes set out in the plain language document. These will be available in advance of the statutory ME scheme coming into effect from April.

- Guidance for crematorium authorities and crematorium managers will reflect the changes to the Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008;
- Guidance for registered medical practitioners will reflect the changes to the Notification of Deaths Regulations 2019;
- Guidance for applicants will reflect the changes to the Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008;
- Guidance for crematorium medical referees will reflect the changes to the Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008;
- Guidance for funeral directors will reflect the changes to the Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008.

MOJ will continue to work closely with burial, cremation and funeral sector stakeholders in the run up to April 2024 and will be providing further updates in due course.



## **LAW COMMISSION UPDATE**

### **Laws on Burial, Cremation and New Funerary Methods to be reviewed.**

The Law Commission has announced details of its review of the law governing how we deal with the bodies of loved ones when they die.

The project is being split into three strands:

- Burial law is governed by a patchwork of different legislation including different laws depending on who is responsible for a burial ground. Burial space is running out, and grave reuse has been proposed as a solution, but reforms must include sufficient safeguards. There are also some unresolved issues around what can be done with cremated ashes. The Law Commission will be considering solutions to these issues and intend to consult on this in autumn 2024.
- Advances in technology have led to new methods of dealing with people's remains after they die, such as alkaline hydrolysis and human composting. While these methods are in use in other jurisdictions, in England and Wales they are unregulated. The project will consider what the law should require of these new methods to regulate them. The project will commence in early 2024.
- At the moment decisions a person makes about what happens to their body after death are not binding. Current rules about who has the right to decide about the remains of a deceased person can lead to family disputes. This project will address these issues and consider who is responsible for making arrangements after a death. We intend that this project will begin at the end of 2025.

For further details of these reviews, please go to:

**<https://lawcom.gov.uk/project/burial-cremation-and-new-funerary-methods/>**



# NATIONAL MEDICAL EXAMINER UPDATE

The latest update by National Medical Examiner, Dr Alan Fletcher, has been published and can be read on the [NHS England website](#).

Topics covered in the update include:

- Draft medical examiner regulations published
- New good practice paper - major incidents
- Implementation in Wales
- Digital Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
- Extended hours
- Changes to NHS e-RS referral system in England
- Training and events
- Quarterly reporting in England



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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS



Catholic families may now request to preserve a small portion of their late relative's cremated remains in a "place of significance" to them instead of a church or a cemetery, the Vatican said earlier in the month, in an easing of its stance on the practice. The new instructions came seven years after the Vatican issued guidelines in response to the growing popularity of cremations. At that time, the guidelines stipulated that ashes of the dead must be laid to rest in "a sacred place"—like a church or a graveyard—and not kept at home. Ashes of the dead must also not be scattered "in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewellery or other objects." Those who wished to have their ashes scattered were to be denied Catholic funerals. But in the latest issuance by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vatican may evaluate requests from family to keep part of the ashes in a place of meaning for the deceased, "provided that every type of pantheistic, naturalistic, or nihilistic misunderstanding is ruled out." Ashes can also now be mixed in common cinerary urns, provided that they indicate the identity of each of the deceased "as not to lose the memory of their names." The Catholic Church forbade cremations for centuries, only allowing them in 1963. The latest issuance by the Catholic Church said nothing of alternative forms of disposal of human remains, such as alkaline hydrolysis and human composting. To read the complete article, please head to the: [Time website](#).

SEASON'S GREETINGS AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM ALL AT THE CREMATION  
SOCIETY

WE WILL BE MAKING A DONATION  
TO CRUSE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT  
INSTEAD OF POSTING CARDS





**The Cremation Society**  
Rooted in history: committed to the future

**Please note that our office will be closed  
from 3pm on Friday 22nd December and  
will reopen on Tuesday 2nd January  
2024**

**We wish you all a very Happy Christmas!**





## Current advertisers in **Pharos International**



**Capital Refractories** is a leading manufacturer and supplier of refractory materials offering bespoke design and installation solutions for cremation and incineration systems.



**The CDS Group** offer our clients a complete solution of in-house environmental, design and planning services covering Cemeteries and Crematoria, Parks and Leisure, and Environmental Solutions



**The Columbaria Company** - specialists in the production of personalised memorial artwork and after cremation memorials.



**Edge IT Systems** are market leaders in the supply of cloud based software solutions. Our Epitaph software with digital mapping is specifically designed for cemetery and crematorium facilities management.

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## Current advertisers in **Pharos International**



**FG Marshall** supplied the very first Book of Remembrance to Woking Crematorium in 1938. To this day technology still hasn't replaced the precision, skill and touch of the human hand.



**Facultatieve Technologies** - over 140 years of experience in the design, construction and maintenance of cremation and filtration equipment.



**Fordingbridge** - designers, manufacturers and installers of innovative canopies and walkways.



**Greenbridge Designs** - from individual memorials to complete garden schemes, Greenbridge produce a range of memorials that will seamlessly fit into existing schemes as well as some that will create a stunning alternative.



**IFZW** is an established manufacturer of cremator and emission filter systems.

If you would like to advertise in **Pharos International** please **click here** for a media pack. Attractive discounted rates for 4 issues available upon request for new advertisers. Agency

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## Current advertisers in **Pharos International**



**Obitus** - provider of bereavement technology services, delivering music, webcast and tributes for families, funeral directors and leading funeral venues throughout the UK.



**OrthoMetals** - a family owned and operated business, recycling metals remaining after cremation.



**PlotBox** is an international death care management solution that facilitates cemeteries and crematoria in operating to world-class standards through integrated software and georectified mapping modules.



**Treske** - one of the UK's leading makers and suppliers of bespoke crematorium furniture and soft furnishings.



**Welters** - interment and memorial specialists.

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If you have any news you would like us to consider for future newsletters, please do contact us at [info@cremation.org.uk](mailto:info@cremation.org.uk)



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