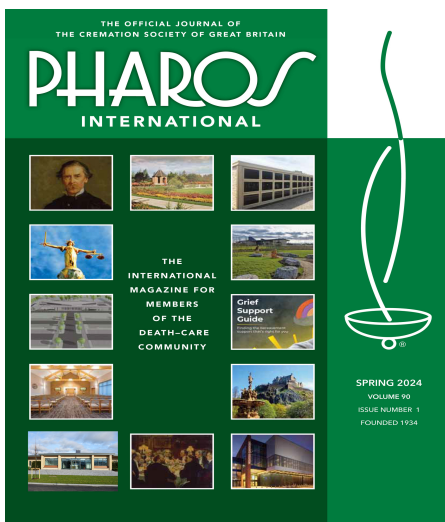




The spring issue of *Pharos International* will soon be available to purchase either as part of an annual subscription or as a one-off issue. You can order your copy online at [www.cremation.org.uk/publications](http://www.cremation.org.uk/publications)

News in this issue includes updates on:

- The Park, Plymouth's brand new crematorium.
- The Isle of Wight crematorium refurbishment.
- The Scottish Parliament: Funeral Director Code of Practice.
- CMA's review of the Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021.



Upgrades to one of Somerset's crematoriums are indefinitely on hold in light of the precarious finances of the unitary council. **South Somerset District Council** attempted over a number of years to upgrade the facility at **Yeovil Crematorium**, located on Bunford Lane in the west of the town, committing money to make it more environmentally friendly and to provide more room for mourners, allowing the building to handle further services. But any further upgrades to the building are now on hold indefinitely as Somerset Council (which replaced the district council in April 2023) seeks to avoid financial oblivion. The original decision to refurbish and upgrade the facility was taken back in June 2017, with the council intending to construct a new chapel, waiting room, a smaller secondary chapel and improved parking facilities, as well as replacing the existing cremators. By March 2020, one of the two replacement cremators had been installed - but the installer went into liquidation, and the new cremator installed had "mercury abatement issues". In light of these issues, the district council voted in February 2022 to provide an additional £800,000 towards upgrading the facility. A further £185,400 was agreed in August 2022 to reflect high inflation within the construction industry. To read the article, please head to: [www.somersetlive.co.uk](http://www.somersetlive.co.uk).



Three new cremators installed in **Falkirk Crematorium** over the past seven months will now see an improved service and better air quality for the area. An investment of £1.6m has been made in the facility that features new abatement equipment which will remove mercury, nitrous oxides and other chemicals before the clean flue gases are released to the outside air. The new equipment will be fully compliant with environmental regulations which relate to crematorium operation and will mean Falkirk has one of the most up-to-date crematoriums in Scotland. The cremators are expected to have an operational lifespan of up to 25 years and use less energy than previously. The cremators were installed by **Facultatieve Technologies** based in Leeds with the design co-ordinated by the Council's Building Design team. For the full article, please visit the [Falkirk Council website](#).

A council has defended its plan to spend millions on developing a new crematorium. **Chelmsford City Council** said it feared the current site in the city would be full in two years. Almost £11m could be spent on building the new facility at a location that has been identified but not publicly named. The local authority hoped additional income would be generated by an increased number of cremations and burials held at the new site. It aimed to expand the amount of cremations from 2,200 to 2,400 per year by 2028. Burials would rise from 41 to 50 annually, the **Local Democracy Reporting Service** wrote. The council believed the new site, which it would not name while negotiations with landowners were ongoing, would cost £4m, with development and building works budgeted at £6.8m. The figures were questioned at a city council cabinet meeting in January. To read the full article, please visit [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).

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**Worcester City Council** is recruiting a design team for the £6 million expansion and renewal of **Astwood Crematorium** with a deadline of 22nd March 2024. The ‘experienced and proactive’ multi-disciplinary design team chosen for the estimated £300,000 contract will refurbish and extend the late 1950s, two-storey brick building which sits within a 68ha cemetery on the northern fringes of the City of Worcester. The £6 million project, planned to complete in 2026, will see the complex enlarged by 25 per cent and fitted with new cremators to replace its existing gas-powered facilities which are nearing the end of their operational life. According to the brief: ‘The proposed works include alteration to the existing footprint with improvements and extension to visitor reception and chapel areas including a new Porte Cochere along with partial façade recladding. As well as front of house the council are proposing improvements to back of house and operational areas including the replacement of the existing gas cremators which are nearing the end of their operational life. A final decision is still to be taken on either gas or electric cremators.’ To read the full article, please head to: [www.architectsjournal.co.uk](http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk).

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The Park, **Plymouth's** brand new crematorium, has hit its latest significant construction milestone. Located off **Haye Road in Plympton**, The Park has designs inspired by the landscape, where the buildings will nestle into the slope of the site. It marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the Council's Bereavement Service who will move to the site when construction finishes this Summer. The Park is being built with Plymouth Limestone and the Ceremony Rooms look out onto pooled water. Outside, reflective spaces, designed for memorialisation and scatterings will embrace the local environment and ecology. Crucially, though, it will have two rooms available for families to hire for wakes, memorialisation events or other family functions. Later this year, the Bereavement Service team will move to The Park from its existing base at Weston Mill. At that point, all cremations will take place there, with Efford and Weston Mill still active for burial and memorials. For the full article, please visit: [www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk).

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The **Isle of Wight** crematorium has recently undergone refurbishment, resulting in a more accessible and comfortable space for the community. The renovation included replacing the old wooden pews with new chairs, new carpet, adding new lecterns, catafalques, and an altar, and installing new committal curtains and voiles with a motorised 'floating style' track. The new additions give the chapel a more spacious and elegant appearance. These modifications offer greater flexibility in seating arrangements during ceremonies, resulting in an increased seating capacity from 85 to 105. For the full article, please go to: [www.iwradio.co.uk](http://www.iwradio.co.uk).

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Plans have been submitted to **Aberdeenshire Council** for a new crematorium at **Mains of Glack** near Daviot. The building is 'wedge' shaped, with the projecting entrance arms at the lower end guiding visitors down the pedestrian path from the car park before arriving at the main entrance. The Entrance Hall, and the Chapel are deliberately longer and narrower than they are square, to continue this emphasis through and towards the rear of the building. The chapel space then features a sloping ceiling which then lifts up to the large rear glazing looking directly towards Bennachie. The hope is that the journey along this linear route, with the building suddenly increasing in height within the Chapel space, and framing this instantly recognisable and important view, would give a visitor an emotional lift. To read the full article, please go to: [www.grampianonline.co.uk](http://www.grampianonline.co.uk).

## **Funeral Director Code of Practice: approved by The Scottish Parliament**

The Scottish Government is pleased to confirm that the draft **Funeral Director Code of Practice** ('the Code') received parliamentary approval on 31 January 2024.

Please see the Scottish Government website for the **approved code**.

As set out by the Scottish Government in that documentation and the letter from the Minister, funeral directors will now have 12 months to become fully compliant with the Code before the intended date of the Code being issued and brought into force by the Scottish Government on **1st March 2025**. From the intended issue date onwards, funeral directors in Scotland must comply with the Code as is required by **section 97 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016**.

The Code, once issued and in operation, will apply to all funeral directors carrying out the functions of a funeral director in Scotland regardless of where their business is based. We encourage all funeral directors to carefully read the Code and ensure they are fully compliant by 1st March 2025. In future, it is intended that funeral director businesses will be inspected against the standards within the Code with appropriate steps to be available to inspectors for the purpose of ensuring compliance.



An annual review of the funerals market, published by the **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)**, suggests its **Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021** is continuing to have a beneficial impact on the costs paid by bereaved relatives when arranging a funeral.



The review of the funerals sector – based on submissions from large funeral directors operating in the sector – found that funeral directors operating more than 5 branches charged their customers just over £2,700 for funeral services between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023, on average. Whilst this is higher (4%) than the previous year, it does represent a decrease in real terms, once the higher rate of inflation is factored in.

Over the same period, there was a rise in the numbers of people choosing unattended funerals – with the total proportion of these cheaper funerals rising to 11% in 2023 (up from 8% in 2022). This, coupled with previous annual reviews, suggests there is a gradually rising trend amongst bereaved families to opt for remote funeral services, which is likely to be linked to the requirement to conduct unattended funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic and the desire to reduce costs in response to the rising cost of living.

While it is too early to determine whether the real terms fall in the average cost of a funeral represents a positive downward trend for bereaved families, the CMA is concerned that the average cost of unattended funerals (with revenues reported by funeral directors up 12% in 2023) appears to have risen faster than the rate of inflation. The CMA will continue to keep a close eye on consumer outcomes in this market.

The CMA is stepping up its enforcement work to tackle those funeral and crematorium directors who fail to comply with the Order – with evidence of problems received from customers, charities, and professionals in the sector and through the CMA's active monitoring suggesting just under 250 funeral directors are failing to comply with the law. Many of these have failed to display the necessary pricing information for funeral or crematorium services – in branch and online. The CMA has written to each of these firms to remind them of their responsibilities and will escalate its enforcement action should a funeral director continue to breach the law.

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



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**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.



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

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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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