

Brompton Cemetery Grave Re-Use Policy

Policy Statement

The operational sustainability of Brompton Cemetery was a fundamental element of the successful bid for grant funding submitted to the Heritage Lottery and BIG Lottery funds.

Brompton Cemetery, like all other cemeteries in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) is at capacity.

In order to continue to manage Brompton Cemetery as a working cemetery, The Royal Parks were granted faculty permission from the Diocese of London (September 2018) as amended (August 2019) to allow the re-use of public graves on consecrated land. This permission was granted under the legal requirements set out under S.25 of the Burials Act 1857 as amended by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2014 No.1.

The policy is aligned to industry best practice and guidance, in particular, the re-use technical guidance document issued by the London Environment Directors Network (LEDNET) <https://www.lpgsf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Re-Use-Technical-Guidance-Document-Final-October-2013.pdf>

What is Grave Re-use?

Grave re-use involves undertaking a new burial in graves previously used for burials at depths where it may be necessary to disturb the original human remains. It will involve the so-called 'lift and deepen' approach in which existing remains, if found, would be reinterred in the same grave at greater depth, creating space for a new burial on top. Re-use will take place only over public (or common) graves. The re-use of private graves will not be undertaken at this time; however, it cannot be ruled out in future.

Key Principles of Re-use

1. Graves will not be re-used until a period of at least seventy-five years has elapsed since the last burial took place.
2. Graves used for burials during the Second World War Blitz years will not be selected for re-use. (Sept 1940- May 1941)

3. Additional policies will guide the type and style of new memorialisation permitted.
4. At this stage The Royal Parks will not be re-using plots where existing headstones are legible; such headstones will not be removed.
5. Illegible memorial headstones will be removed, recorded (written record and image) and placed into storage if these plots are not claimed during the public re-use notification period to allow for memorialisation of the new graves.
6. The Royal Parks will introduce and follow clear notification, objection, and appeals procedures regarding re-use plans for individual graves.
7. The Royal Parks will undertake a period of public notification confirming the locations and burial numbers involved through the erection of signs on site (for a period of 6 months prior to re-use) and advertisements in the Evening Standard (for 2 consecutive weeks).
8. Before the lease of a new burial plot is signed, the purchaser will be told whether the grave in question is a re-used grave.
9. Records of all burial excavations will be completed and retained recording details of items found.
10. Any artefact found during excavations will be reburied along with the reburied remains.
11. All staff will act in a suitably reverential manner showing due respect to the human remains throughout the 'lift and deepen' reburial operations.
12. Re-use of plots will take place strictly in accordance with this Policy; all staff will be appropriately trained and competent in all operations and will act in line with the Manual of Cemetery Operations.