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News

Views sought on water cremations

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Consultations launched on funeral sector.

The public is being asked for views on alkaline hydrolysis (water cremations), burials, funeral director licensing and funeral sector inspections in four separate public consultations.

The regulations proposed in the consultations aim to protect the dignity of the deceased and increase confidence in the funeral sector by ensuring minimum standards of good care and services are maintained.

Responses to the consultation on the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill showed there was public support for the introduction of new, environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional burial or

cremation in Scotland. Alkaline hydrolysis is already in use in other countries, such as Ireland, Canada and USA. This consultation sets out the safeguards which would be put in place to ensure alkaline hydrolysis would be subject to the same high standards as burial and cremation.

Public Health Minister Jenni Minto said:

“Bereavement can be emotionally overwhelming and being able to engage with the practical issues and funeral arrangements can be very difficult.

“However, it is something everyone is likely to experience at some stage in their life, whether it's the death of a family member, a loved one, or a friend.

“Having confidence in the care and dignity given to our loved ones, along with the compassionate and professional treatment of those bereaved, can go some way to alleviating that distress. The rare instances where this does not happen satisfactorily can have long-standing impacts on people.

“This is why we need to ensure we get the right policy and legal frameworks in place and I urge anyone with views on the issues in these consultations to take the time to respond.”

National Association of Funeral Directors Scotland President Mark Shaw said:

“The National Association of Funeral Directors is delighted to welcome and support the public consultations into key areas that will help shape the funeral sector in a new, regulated landscape.

“These new regulations designed to support the oversight of standards in the funeral sector will provide reassurance and security to bereaved people and funeral directors, while the proposed introduction of alkaline hydrolysis, or water cremation, is a step forward in offering future alternatives to burial and cremation.

“These are incredibly important next steps to support bereaved people, and we urge everyone to have their say.”

National Society of Allied Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) Scotland President James Morris said:

“SAIF Scotland are encouraged to see the process of regulation reach the public consultation stage.

“Regulation of the Scottish funeral sector will maintain and ensure the high standards of funeral service, care of the deceased and delivery to the tens of thousands of families in need of a funeral director each year.

“SAIF Scotland looks forward to continuing to work with the Scottish Government on what has been an open and consultative process and has thoughtfully addressed concerns shared by both the Government and the funeral sector.”

BACKGROUND

[Burial and cremation consultation collection](#)

Alkaline hydrolysis is a method of disposal of human remains using hot water with the addition of potassium hydroxide, or sodium hydroxide, or a mix of both.

The consultations close on 17 November 2023.

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