

To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board

On: 29 August 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Historic Graveyards - Tourism Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Economy and Regeneration Board of progress made in respect of the Council motion of 28 April 2022 to review Renfrewshire's historic graveyards and their future tourism potential.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
- (i) Notes the work undertaken and progress to date.
 - (ii) Notes the intent to bring a further report to Board at a later date.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Council meeting of 28 April 2022 approved a motion in relation to "Renfrewshire's Historic Graveyards". The motion states:-

That Council agrees that officers should undertake a review of the historic graveyards within Renfrewshire, identifying ownership and maintenance requirements and report back with recommendations to enhance the valuable contribution these can make for tourism and future generations."

- 3.2 Although history, heritage, and culture are key aspects of Renfrewshire's tourism proposition, historic graveyards have not specifically been promoted. This report provides an update on work undertaken by officers in response to the motion and sets out a range of next steps.

4. Ownership and Maintenance

- 4.1 Research to date indicates that there are currently 33 graveyards in Renfrewshire (Appendix 1), of which 9 remain active burial grounds (as of 2023).
- 4.2 The Council currently owns 23 churchyards and cemeteries and is responsible for their maintenance and upkeep. Maintenance works are practical in nature and include grass cutting and addressing unsafe structures as part of the councils memorial safety inspection programme. The Environment and Infrastructure Team will be carrying out a project on burial databases this year as the Council does not currently have information on grave ownership within churchyards.
- 4.3 Further investigation is currently underway in respect of identifying owners of the graveyards which are under private ownership and other stakeholders, to support understanding of access arrangements, maintenance regimes and opportunities for heritage tourism.

5. Tourism Potential – Initial Findings

- 5.1 Alongside the ongoing review of ownership, initial research has been undertaken by officers to consider the tourism potential of Renfrewshire's historic graveyards. This has included contact with stakeholders who have an interest or key role in relation to the promotion of local heritage, such as the Heritage Centre managed by OneRen and Renfrewshire Local History Forum.
- 5.2 The feedback received from initial discussions suggests that at present, interest in historic graveyards as part of Renfrewshire's tourism proposition is at a low level and would not currently form the main driver of visits to the area. In addition, graveyards of interest such as Castlehead Churchyard, the resting place of Robert Tannahill, are not owned by the Council and have limited access.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding, feedback also has indicated interest in historic graveyards and their promotion. OneRen's Heritage Centre receive regular enquiries with graveyards listed under Commonwealth War Graves Commission of particular interest, while Woodside Crematorium is promoted through an existing heritage trail www.paisleycemetery.co.uk/heritage-trail/. The Renfrewshire Local History Forum has also indicated that Kilbarchan Old Parish Churchyard (formally Kilbarchan West) may have potential to link with recently re-opened Weavers Cottage, operated by the National Trust for Scotland.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 While research to date has indicated that the promotion of historic graveyards is limited, the potential exists to consider and build on existing activity to support a wider tourism proposition for Renfrewshire. This could for example include the development of a "graveyard trail" which raises awareness of local heritage for both local residents and visitors to the area.

6.2 In this context officers will continue to build on existing datasets in relation to ownership and maintenance with a view to investigating the feasibility of creating a new graveyard/historic trail. It is anticipated this will involve:-

- Further detailed assessment of historic graveyard sites to assess their condition, accessibility and preservation needs. This may require to be undertaken by specialist consultants and officers will explore suitable funding sources in this context.
- Engaging with landowners in respect of access to privately owned graveyards, ongoing maintenance and opportunity for inclusion with a new heritage trail;
- Considering maintenance costs and resource requirements for key historic graveyards under Council ownership;
- Considering additional historic assets, such as memorials, monuments and sculptures which could be incorporated alongside historic graveyards into a new, broader, heritage trail;
- Considering potential funding routes to support further development of any new trail.
- Liaising with the Council's Marketing and Communications team to promote historic graveyards on the Paisley.is and Council website and any potential new trail.

6.3 The work undertaken by officers and the feasibility of a new heritage trail will be informed by ongoing consultation with key local heritage organisations as identified in paragraph 5.1 above.

6.4 Progress on the feasibility assessment will be reported to Board at a future date.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – unknown.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.

3. **Community Planning** –

- **Reshaping our place, our economy and our future:** Renfrewshire Council is working with stakeholders to maximise the opportunities for regeneration and economic recovery/growth.
- **Building strong, safe and resilient communities:** working in partnership with local groups and organisations to achieve positive outcomes.

4. **Legal** – Unknown.

5. **Property/Assets** - None.

6. **Information Technology** – None.

7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.
8. **Health and Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risks** - None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – Recognising Tourism Outlook 2030.
13. **Climate Risk** - No identified impacts at present.

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Appendix 1 - Recorded graveyards in Renfrewshire

(Those marked * remain active)

Bishopton Houston Road Cemetery *

Bridge of Weir, Nittinghill Cemetery

Elderslie

Abbey Cemetery *

Broomward Cemetery *

Erskine Parish Churchyard

Houston & Crosslee Cemetery *

Inchinnan

All Hallows Graveyard

Inchinnan Cemetery *

Inchinnan Old Parish Church

Johnstone

Johnstone Cemetery

Johnstone Churchyard

Johnstone High Parish Church of Scotland Churchyard

Kilbarchan

Kilbarchan Cemetery *

Kilbarchan East Church

Kilbarchan West Kirkyard

Lochwinnoch

Castle Semple Collegiate Churchyard

Lochwinnoch Cemetery *

Saint Winnock's Churchyard

Paisley

Abbey Close Burial Ground

Arkleston Cemetery *

Burntshields Associate Congregation Church Cemetery

Castlehead Churchyard

Gaelic Chapel Graveyard

Gaelic Church Burial Ground

Hawkhead Cemetery *

Oakshaw Trinity Churchyard

Oakshaw United Presbyterian Church Burial Ground

Paisley Abbey

Paisley Laigh Kirk

Paisley Witches Burial Site

St. Mirin's Cathedral

Woodside Cemetery and Crematorium

Renfrew

Mount Zion Church Graveyard

Renfrew Parish Churchyard