



Future-Proofing Bereavement Services:

The Role of Digital Technology

1st May 2025

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Agenda

Changing Landscape

- Evolving challenges and expectations for Local Authorities

Practical Examples & Exercises

- Enabling improved operations, efficiency and experience

What's Next

- Key Considerations to take away from today





A Changing Landscape

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As of 2022, 19% of the UK population was aged 65 or older.

This demographic is projected to rise to 27% by 2072.



A study by Co-op Funeralcare revealed that 68% of people now prefer funerals to be celebrations of life rather than traditional sombre events, up from 58% in 2019.



The average cost of a basic funeral in the UK reached £4,285 in 2023, a 3.5% increase from the previous year.

The total "cost of dying," including funerals, professional fees, and wakes, hit a new peak of £9,797. This has led more families to seek cost-effective and digital alternatives for funeral services.

Political

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Must adhere to legislation, GDPR, environmental legislation, FOIs
- **Public Sector Budget Pressures:** Funding cuts or freezes impact service provision and investment in infrastructure/technology.
- **Government Policy on Environmental Issues:** Increasing pressure to offer greener funeral options, such as natural burials or low-emission cremation technologies.
- **Pandemic Learnings:** Ongoing public health considerations following COVID-19, and changed behaviours

Social

- **Changing Funeral Expectations:** Shift toward personalised, "celebration of life" ceremonies rather than traditional sombre funerals – and growth of Direct Cremations.
- **Digital Natives and Online Expectations:** Families increasingly expect online booking, memorialisation, live-streaming, and digital self-service options.
- **Demographic Trends:** An older population requires more services; at the same time, diverse cultural and religious needs must be met sensitively.
- **Public Transparency and Accountability:** High public expectations for clear communication, fairness, and service quality from public-sector organisations.

Economic

- **Rising Cost of Dying:** Funeral costs continue to increase (basic funeral now averages £4,285 in 2025), putting pressure on families and affecting choices.
- **Budget Constraints:** Local authorities must balance providing quality services with limited financial resources.
- **Demand Management:** An aging population leads to increased demand for services, requiring careful planning.
- **Private Sector Competition:** Growth of private crematoria and funeral service providers offering high-end or tech-enabled services.

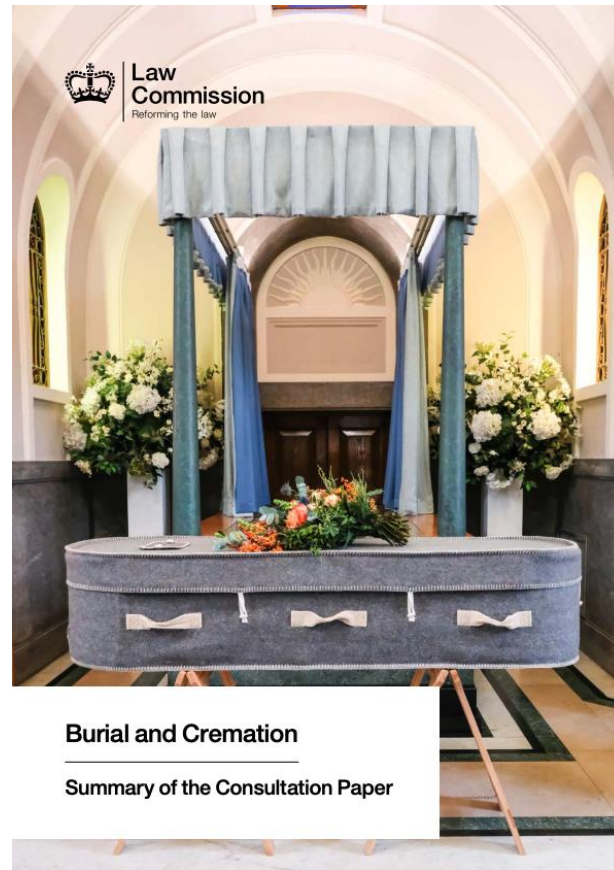
Technological

- **Digital Transformation:** Shift toward online booking systems, digitised records, GIS-based cemetery mapping, and self-service options for the public.
- **Data Protection and Cybersecurity:** Increasing importance of secure handling of sensitive bereavement and personal information.
- **Green Technologies:** Innovations in cremation technology, alternative funerary methods and environmental monitoring systems.

Law Commission Review

Burial, Cremation and New Funerary Methods:

- Burial and Cremations
- New Funerary Methods
- Rights and Obligations in Relation to Funerals, Funerary Methods and Remains



Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016

- **Funeral Director Code of Practice**
 - *Progress towards FD Licensing*
- **The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 (Commencement no. 6) Regulations 2024**
 - *Addresses the duration of burial rights (eff. from 1 March 2026)*
- **The Burial and Cremation (Inspection) (Scotland) Regulations 2025**
 - *Grants powers of inspection and enforcement, introduces the Funeral Register*
- **The Burial (Management) (Scotland) Regulations 2025**
 - *Formalises key operational aspects, including publicly accessible management plan, duty of maintenance, requirement for memorial testing and power to remove unauthorised memorials.*
- **The Burial (Applications and Register) (Scotland) Regulations 2024**
 - *Prescribed forms, ensuring consistency, and accompanying documents. Retained for 50 years from date of burial*



Practical Examples & Exercises

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Service & Stakeholder Mapping Exercise

Internal Stakeholders	External Stakeholders	Regulatory/Oversight Bodies	Community/Advocacy Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bereavement Services Manager• Cemetery/Crematorium Administrators• Grounds Maintenance Teams• Chapel Attendants• Crematorium Technicians• Memorial Sales Teams• Customer Services• Senior LA Management• Finance/Accounts• IT and Digital Teams• Health and Safety Officers• Climate Officers• Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Bereaved• Funeral Directors• Memorial Masons• Officiants• Genealogists and Family History Researchers• Monumental/Memorial Suppliers• Funeral Transport Providers• Public Health Funerals• Environmental Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA)• Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)• Environmental Health Officers• Cremation Authorities and Inspectors (Ministry of Justice)• Health and Safety Executive (HSE)• Local Planning Authorities• Data Protection Authorities (compliance with GDPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friends of the Cemetery Groups• Veteran and Military Associations (for remembrance services)• Religious Groups and Faith Communities• Local Residents Associations• Environmental Campaign Groups• Bereavement Support Charities (e.g., Cruse Bereavement Care)

Service & Stakeholder Mapping Exercise



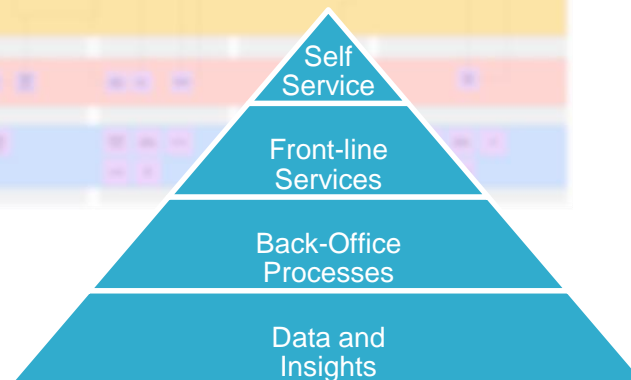
Set measurable PI's e.g.:

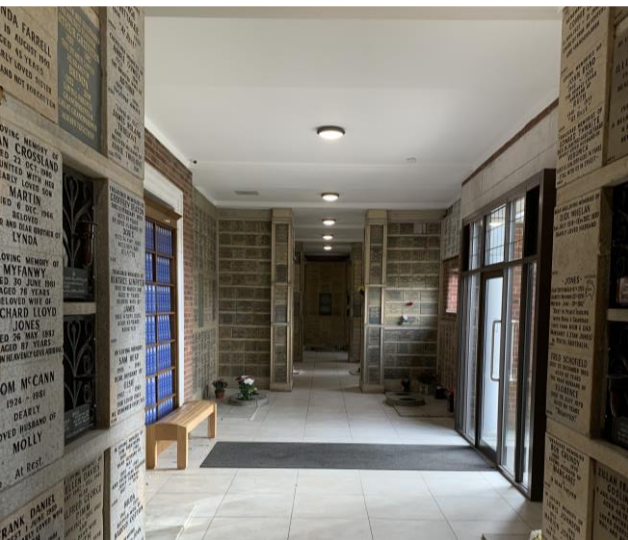


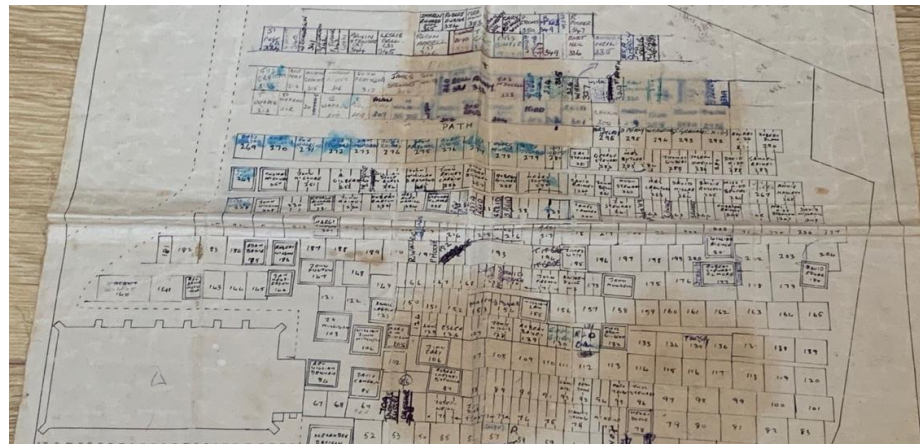
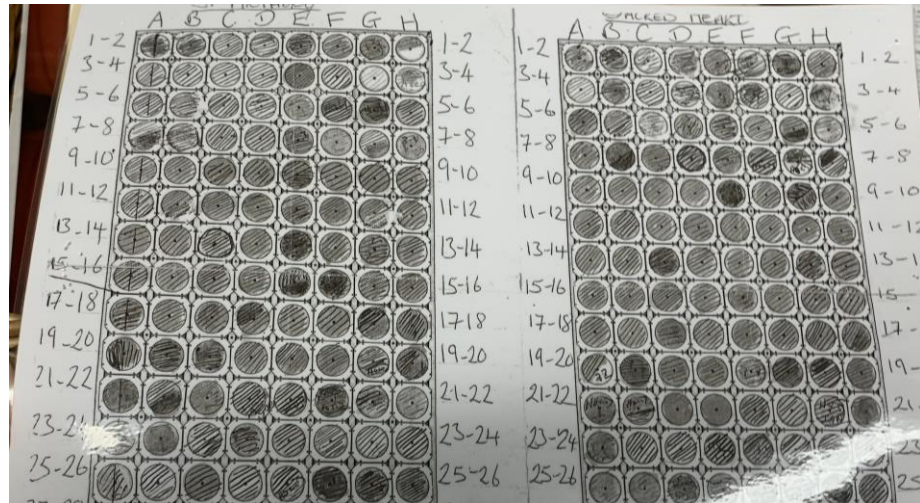
By Dec 2025...

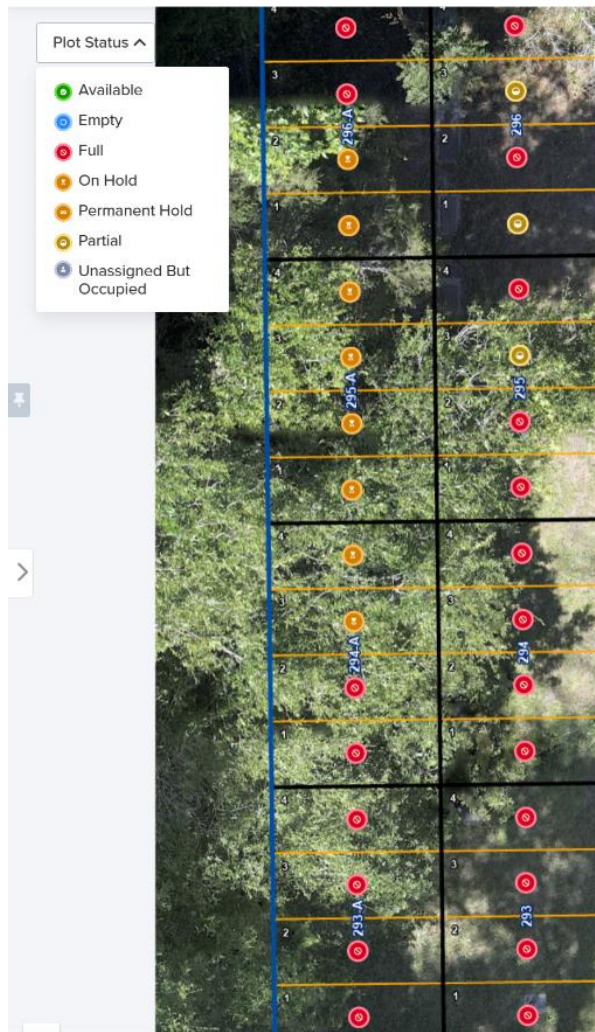
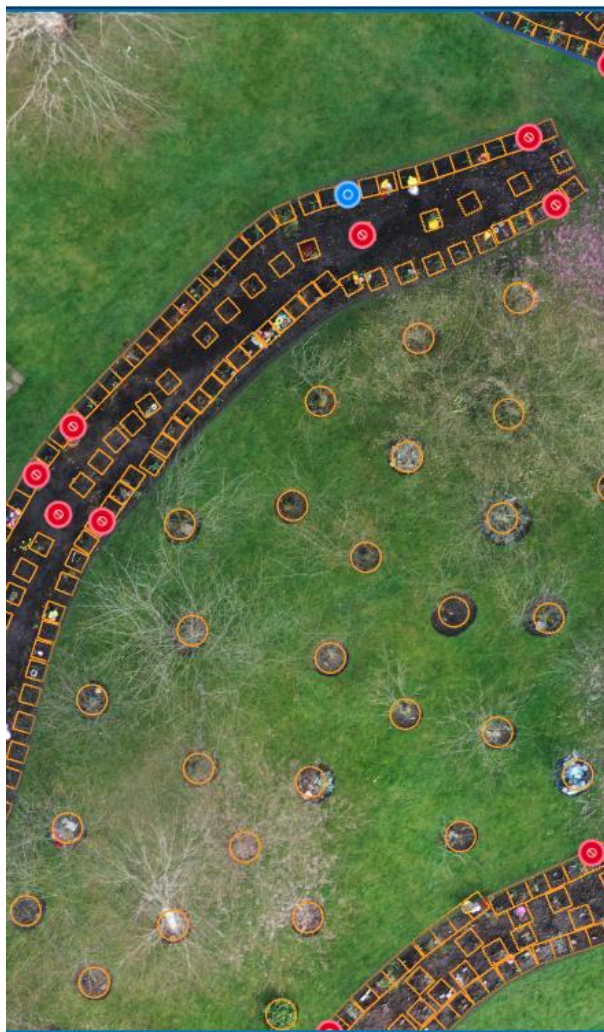
80% of Cremation Bookings will happen via the FD Portal


60% of Memorial Permits will be submitted via the Mason Portal













Derby City Council





Quick Search Deceased Records

First Name

Last Name

First Name


Last Name

Cemetery


Cemetery

Search

[Advanced Search](#)



Belfast City Council





WILLIAM JAMES (VISCOUNT) PIRRIE

Person of Interest

Suggest an Edit

Profile Information

Full Name

WILLIAM JAMES (VISCOUNT) PIRRIE

Date of Birth

Unknown


Date of Death

7 Jun 1924

Date of Burial

23 Jun 1924

Age





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CEMETERY

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Etta James


'JAMESETTA HAWKINS'

Scan to walk to their final resting place



Get Directions

Powered by



Data and Insights

1) Understand the data you hold...

- **Operational Data** – *Burial/Cremation Registers, Bookings Data, AV/Streaming Logs, Memorial Safety Inspections, Memorial Permits, Work Orders*
- **Customer Facing Data** – *EROB Records, Memorial Applications & Leases, Genealogy Data, Customer Enquiries/Complaints*
- **Regulatory & Compliance Data** – *PH Records, EH Reports, Financial Transactions, Audit & Compliance Reports*

2) Consider questions to be answered

- **Inventory Management** – *are we confident in our remaining capacity / usage trends?*
- **Potential for Grave Re-Use** – *Are we ready for this? Should we prepare now?*
- **Return of Ashes** – *Is our record keeping process adequate?*
- **FOI Requests** – *Can we easily respond to these?*
- **Internal Audit** – *How can we be “audit-ready”*
- **Regulatory/Industry Returns** – *Can we easily generate the CMA, Cremation Society returns?*



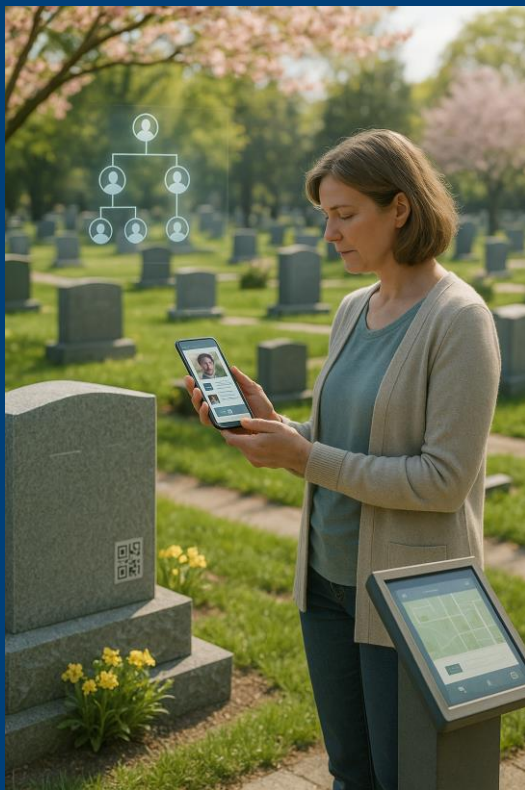
What's Next

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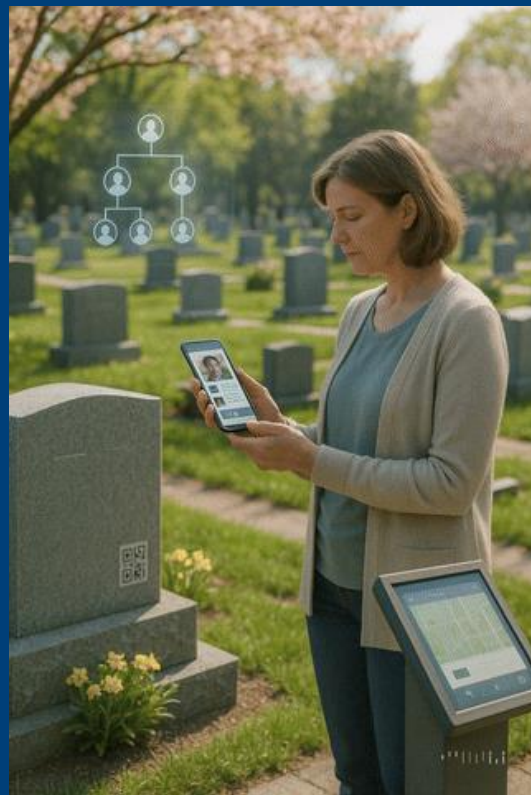
Key Takeaways to Consider

1. **Operational Excellence & Efficiency** - staff can access real-time data, respond to queries faster, and reduce manual handovers between systems. **Ensure consistency, reduce chance for error.**
2. **Customer Experience Enhancement** - Self-service options for public and Funeral Directors will reduce call volumes and empower users. Consistent, accurate service delivery across sites improves trust and supports reputation for quality.
3. **Data-Driven Decision-Making** - Centralised reporting tools provide real-time visibility across all operations. Supports improved financial oversight, trend analysis, and compliance with statutory reporting/audit obligations.
4. **Consistency & Compliance** - Standardised processes help ensure accurate application of fees, service consistency, and reduce the risk of missed revenue or compliance breaches. Digital records and workflow automation **support audit readiness** and documentation best practices.
5. **Sustainability & ESG** - Digital workflows reduce paper usage, travel between sites, and physical storage requirements. Cloud solutions often hosted on Net Zero/Negative infrastructure
6. **Market Competitiveness & Innovation** - Remain competitive with modern operators by adopting leading-edge tools (e.g. digital mapping, online bookings).

And then,
there's AI



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Thank you.

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