

Introducing the ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS REPORT

On the 19th October 2020 the National Executive Committee agreed a number of actions in response to the environmental challenges facing members. In particular:

- 1. The National Executive Council recognises the need for the Federation to react proactively to the increasing global emergency and will seek to support its members take positive steps to help protect the environment;*
- 2. The Federation will play a full role working with like-minded organisations to develop initiatives, such as the Environmental Stewardship Group, to further the objective set out above;*
- 3. The Crematorium Compliance Inspection scheme will be extended to include a section on the environment.*

*National Executive Committee
19th October 2020*

In support of item 2 above, the Federation is playing a full role working with its partners the ICCM, Cremation Society and the CDS Group in the development of the Environmental Stewardship Group (ESG). Members will be hearing much more about the ESG in the coming months.

On a practical level the Federations Crematorium Compliance Inspection scheme has been extended to include an additional section which will produce a separate Environmental Awareness Report. It will not form part of the actual compliance report at the current time, instead it will be as an advisory document.

Crematoria and cremation, like all human interactions with the environment, have an impact. It is necessary for crematoria to increase the positive impacts the service and its users may have on the environment whilst also seeking to reduce negative impacts.

The Environmental Awareness Report is based on the answers to 16 questions covering 4 key areas of operation:

- Cremator operation, including the use of filtration to reduce emissions, how cremators are operated – if a policy of holding over is adopted to enable several cremations to be carried out one after another to reduce fuel usage and production of CO2.
- Grounds and environmental features, considers the use of chemicals in grounds maintenance, installing charging points for vehicles, ensuring areas are set aside to encourage biodiversity and the use of a range of memorials including ones which can be recycled.
- The culture of any organisation, is the crematorium management open to change and adopting the environmental agenda, including replacing petrol and diesel equipment with electric powered tools. Has the crematorium adopted an environmental policy?
- Finally, energy usage has the building got an Energy Performance Certificate, has the facility switched to a renewable energy supplier?

Each answer is weighted to produce an overall score which the member can use to assess their environmental awareness against the national average.

The questions are:

1. Cremator Operation

- a) Cremators are operated in accordance with the Process Guidance notes for Crematoria.

Evidence

Crematoria are required to operate in accordance with the Defra/SEPA Process Guidance notes 5/12, relating to cremation. In doing so they must obtain an operating permit from their local authority regulator, and any adverse operating conditions must be recorded and reported.

Result

Yes – they have an up to date operating permit

No - they do not have an up to date operating permit

- b) Is the cremator fitted with mercury arrestment as described in Process Guidance Note PG5/2 (12)

Evidence

The cremation process produces a range of potentially harmful emissions, including mercury, heavy metals and dioxins. Manufacturers have developed technology to filter/treat these harmful emissions and these should be installed.

Result

Yes – Yes filtration technology is used

No – No filtration technology is not used

c) Is the cremator fitted with NOx abatement equipment?

Evidence

Nitrogen Oxide (NOX) is a greenhouse gas which has a negative impact on the environment and human health. There are 2 main sources of NOX in combustion – one is ‘thermal’ NOX which is largely driven by high combustion temperatures which produce a reaction of nitrogen and oxygen – the other is ‘chemical’ NOX, which arises from nitrogen bound up in the materials being burnt. The negative impact on the environment and human health can be mitigated by the installation of NOx abatement equipment.

Result

Yes – Yes NOx abatement is in place

No – No NOx abatement is not in place.

d) Cremators are operated in an environmentally aware manner.

Evidence

Raising the temperature of cremators to operating levels uses considerable amounts of energy, whilst producing CO2. This negative impact can be mitigated by carrying out several cremations once the cremator is at operating temperature. A policy of ‘holding over’, in accordance with the Code of Cremation Practice facilitates this.

Result

Yes – Yes a process is in place to allow holding over

No – No a process is not in place to hold over

e) Encouraging the use of non - Particle Board (Chipboard/MDF) coffins

The construction of chipboard and MDF coffins involves the use of formaldehyde and other resins to bind together the material. It is known that this produces NOx during the cremation process which is a greenhouse gas. To prevent the formation of NOx, alternatives to chipboard/MDF coffins should be encouraged through permitting alternative products, the education of Funeral Directors and the public.

Evidence:

The Cremation Authority permits the use of alternative forms of coffin, including solid wood (from a sustainable forest source), cardboard, wicker etc. which is evidenced in freely available official literature.

Result:

Yes: the Crematorium does permit coffins other than chipboard/MDF

No: the Crematorium does not permit alternative forms of coffin

f) Energy is recovered

Evidence

A considerable amount of energy is used/generated in the cremation process, the vast majority of which exits direct to atmosphere. The installation of new technologies, including heat exchangers, enables some of this energy to be recovered to heat the facility. Thus, reducing the negative impact on the environment through the reduction in energy required to heat the building.

Result

Yes – Yes heat energy is recovered.

No – No heat energy is not recovered.

2. Grounds related environmental initiatives.

a) Electric/hybrid vehicle recharging points are provided.

Evidence

The increasing use of electric/hybrid vehicles has resulted in the provision of charging points across the UK in a variety of locations. The provision of charging points in crematoria car parks will enable visitors to charge cars whilst they are at services.

Result

Yes – Yes charging points are available.

No – No charging points are not available.

b) Grounds are maintained in an environmentally aware manner.

The intensive maintenance of grounds has been recognised as damaging to the environment. For example, the widespread harvesting of peat releasing stored

CO2 to the atmosphere. The use of peat free compost, limiting the application of chemical based pesticides, fungicides and herbicides, the reduction of ornamental lawns requiring intensive maintenance, setting aside and rewilding natural areas to encourage wildlife can all benefit the environment.

Evidence:

Visual evidence of environmental aware practises, products and the environment

Result

Yes – Yes grounds are maintained in an environmentally aware manner

No – No grounds are not maintained in an environmentally aware manner

c) The organisation encourages the adoption of sustainable and recyclable memorials.

A significant number of bereaved families are comforted by visiting a memorial. Most memorials are now made from granite which is imported from countries including China and India, the considerable distances involved in transporting the granite increases its carbon footprint creating considerable amounts of CO2. In addition, the granite itself does not support biodiversity.

There are more environmentally friendly alternatives which support bio diversity, can be recycled or are produced locally.

Evidence

The Cremation Authority permits/supplies locally quarried stone, metal or wooden memorials.

Result:

Yes: the Cremation Authority provides sustainable alternatives to granite memorials

No: the Cremation Authority does not permit alternatives to granite memorials.

d) Welcoming wildlife

Formal crematoria grounds are appreciated by many families as a reflection of the respect and dignity shown to the deceased. However, high intensity maintenance regimes do not encourage or support biodiversity. It is important there is a mixture of formal and natural areas within the grounds.

Evidence:

Areas identified and specifically maintained to 'welcome wildlife' through a recognised maintenance regime. To ensure they are not mistaken for 'neglected areas' there is clear indicators that the grounds are managed to encourage wildlife, for example a mowing strip along the edge, provision of bug hotels, wood piles, nest boxes, a good variety of bee friendly wildflowers and information signs.

Result:

Yes: there are areas set aside and maintained to welcome wildlife

No: there are no areas set aside to encourage wildlife.

e) Does the facility harvest rainwater in sufficient quantities for use in its ground maintenance activities?

Changes to our climate and future weather patterns indicate that the UK and mainland Europe can expect to experience longer, warmer, drier summers, and warmer and wetter winters. Climate change predictions highlight the need to manage our water usage more efficiently to minimise the effects of these changes on our daily lives. Rainwater harvesting reduces water bills, demand on supply, reduces flooding and soil erosion.

Evidence:

Visual inspection of water collection and storage facilities and the equipment utilised in the distribution of such.

Result:

Yes: the facility has the necessary facilities to provide the collection and distribution of rainwater in commercial quantities.

No: the facility cannot collect and distribute commercial quantities of harvested rainwater.

f) Does the facility demonstrate effective recycling activities

The efficiency of recycling contributes significantly to reducing the environmental impact of the manufacturing process, recycling plastic reduces CO₂ by 2.5 times compared to virgin plastic. Aluminium cans require 20 times more energy to produce compared to one recycled. The RHS has stated that as of 2021 the use of Oasis blocks for floral arrangements will not continue at the Chelsea flower show as the product is constructed of 'micro-plastics'. 90% of floral tributes are disposed of in general waste skips and not separated from the oasis.

Evidence:

Clear signposting of recycling points, provision for the separation of materials, Glass, Plastics including Oasis, Metals, organic materials etc. Inspection of Contract or Invoices / Statements confirming regular collection.

Result:

Yes: visual evidence around the site.

No: no direct evidence of a targeted approach to recycling.

3. Organisational Culture

a) The culture of the organisation encourages the adoption of environmentally aware initiatives

The range of products and services designed to reduce environmental impact is growing apace. For example, petrol/diesel mowers, strimmer's, trucks can all now be replaced with battery operated machines/tools. Solar panels can be installed on buildings to reduce energy consumption, drought intolerant plant species can be used to reduce watering and water consumption can be metered and monitored. Abatement for NOx can be installed.

Evidence:

Management cultures need to be seen to encourage the adoption of these and other initiatives, through practical and written examples where possible.

Result

Yes: the culture of the organisation encourages the adoption of environmentally aware initiatives which have been seen

No: the culture of the organisation does not encourage the adoption of environmentally aware initiatives

b) Does the facility have an Environmental Policy?

An environmental policy, such as the FBCA 'Commit Policy', is an agreed documented statement of the facilities stance towards the environment in which it operates. The policy is the cornerstone of its intent to reduce its carbon footprint, improve recycling, reduce reliance on packaging, minimising waste, improve efficiencies on finite natural resources in all of the operations and all departments.

Evidence:

Visual inspection of the live policy and its review cycle in a formal signed and agreed document

Result:

Yes: Copy of the formal policy presented for inspection

No: No formal policy available

4. Energy usage

a) Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of the facilities.

Commercial Energy Performance Certificates EPCs certify how energy efficient a property is by using a rating system from A-G, with A being the most efficient. An EPC is derived from standard information regarding the energy efficiency levels and carbon emissions present in a building when checked against a comparative building.

Evidence:

Up to date Certification is available for inspection, the chapel is exempt but a certificate for all other buildings under 50 square meters must be provided for inspection.

Result:

Yes: the facility has current certification.

No: the facility does not have current certification or exemption.

b) Has the facility switched to a Renewable Energy Supplier?

***Renewable energy** is energy that is collected from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat. It promotes: -*

- making use of secure and local resources*
- reducing your dependence on non-renewable energy*
- helping to reduce the production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases*

Evidence:

The facility is able to produce a current invoice or statement identifying that its energy was produced from renewable sources

Result:

Yes: the facility utilises a renewable energy supply

No: the facility is yet to use a renewable energy source

Initially during 2021 it is intended to visit 60 crematoria from which it will be possible to arrive at an indication of the level of environmental awareness across the sector. The Federation National Executive Committee will review the results in December 2021 and decide if it is to be made a permanent part of the compliance scheme. Anonymising the results, the data will also be shared with partners from the ESG to encourage further improvement and support research being jointly undertaken.

If any member should wish to have an inspection and Environmental Awareness Report, free of charge, please contact admin@fbca.org.uk.