

Clerk to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee
Committee Office
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

2 December 2015

Dear Sirs

Re: Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill

By way of introduction, Dignity is the largest provider of cremation services in Scotland and operates the following crematoria: Moray, Holytown, Dundee and Holmsford Bridge which carry out in excess of 4500 cremations per annum. Dignity is also the largest operator in England with a further 35 crematoria carrying out in excess of 50,000 cremations.

It is good to see that a practical approach has been adopted by the Scottish Government in terms of the new Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill which responds to the recommendations resulting from the Lord Bonomy report.

I would like to confine my comments in this letter to question 6 in the call for evidence which is as follows:

6 *The appropriateness of the removal of existing provisions restricting the proximity of new crematorium to housing?*

There is a very strong argument for the peace tranquillity and protection of the dignity that should be afforded to all users of a crematorium. This extends not only to attendance of a cremation service but also to the many visitors to the gardens of remembrance throughout the year. A custom which can be observed not only in Scotland, but throughout the UK. The process of bereavement extends through many years for many people and spending time in peaceful surroundings is an important part of the dealing with bereavement. It is vital that this is reflected in the Cremation Acts in maintaining a 'safe distance' between a crematorium and surrounding development and remains an important part of development consideration of the layout of the grounds.

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Section 5 of the 1902 Cremation Act affords this through its 200 yard rule, not allowing a crematorium to be built within close proximity to housing. It is a misconception that this rule relates simply to the 'emissions' from cremators, although this has significantly improved over recent years, particularly due to the mercury abatement plant.

We have developed a large number of new crematoria over recent years and have observed that siting of a crematorium is always a biggest single issue for the public. One of our most detailed considerations in development terms is that of the peace and tranquillity that we can create within the memorial gardens. The general consensus of the public is that nobody wants a crematorium to be built anywhere near their home. If the 200 yard rule were to be abolished, there will be a danger that there could be a culture of cremation migrating towards an 'industrial' type of disposal. For example there will be a potential possibility for a funeral director with large premises to operate a cremator within a 'built up area'. We could see development though towns and cities without due care for needs of the bereaved were they not to include a tranquil space to ensure a dignified and peaceful experience. Abolishment of this rule will significantly reduce the service level to all users of future developed crematoria throughout Scotland; this is not in the public interest.

It is also my opinion that there should be a direct link to the way in which planning is granted. Currently planning can and has been granted which has led to the 1902 cremation act being contravened. There are penalties in place to ensure compliance but enforcement has not been observed. The only way to maintain or improve the standard of care to the bereaved is to maintain and enforce compliance of the 1902 Cremation Act in respect of this rule. Planning should not be granted without due consideration to the Cremation Acts.

The 200 yard rule affords the bereaved time and space to both conduct a right and proper funeral ceremony and also deal with bereavement over the many years that are often required.

I trust you will find this helpful and allow you to share some practical comments borne out of many years of work within this industry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further discussion would assist the development of this new Bill.

Yours faithfully



Steve Gant

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