

PE2087/O: Pass a law making exercising a dog in a cemetery an offence

South Lanarkshire Council written submission, 3 June 2025

Issues with dog exercising/walking in cemeteries is a problem which seems to have increased in the last few years. There have been many complaints from visitors to cemeteries regarding dog fouling, dogs being allowed to run over lairs and aggressive behaviour from person/s in charge of dogs when challenged. This aggressive behaviour has been experienced by members of the public as well as Council staff.

Signage in cemeteries clearly state that all dogs must be on lead and under control. We have additional signs which informs of the potential fines faced for not clearing any fouling. Extract of the management rules relating to animals in cemeteries are at the entrance to each cemetery. Council staff will engage with people when in the cemetery where the rules are not being followed. However as stated above this can lead to Council staff being subjected to unacceptable behaviour.

Whilst it is understandably an emotive subject and is distressing and upsetting for the bereaved and visitors experiencing such behaviour within a cemetery it is unclear how a law to prevent dogs being taken into a cemetery would work, the difficulties faced and consideration needs to be given to the following:

- How would enforcement be managed? Enforcement would require additional staffing and funding resources that the Council does not have.
- The vast majority of cemeteries are unmanned on a day-to-day basis so raises the additional resourcing that would be required.
- Additional workload of Police Scotland
- Would mourners with dogs only be allowed to attend a funeral service or would they be allowed when visiting a loved one
- A law could potentially have the opposite effect desired with challenges made when someone does not adhere to the law and situations turn more physical than verbal

This is a potentially divisive issue as if someone wants to exercise their dog in a cemetery, they can see it as their right and sometimes simply do not understand why anyone would have a problem. Cemeteries are and should be open spaces for someone to reflect and contemplate. Many people visit cemeteries where they have no-one buried but enjoy the feeling of tranquillity a cemetery can bring them and may enjoy doing so with their dog and still maintain the rules of a cemetery. Certainly, there needs to be more discussion and investigation of this issue and what reasonable, effective and sustainable actions that can be taken on a country wide basis to prevent dogs being allowed in a cemetery and new legislation banning dogs may not be the best way forward. An alternative may be a campaign led by the

Scottish Parliament which raises the profile of the issue and makes the exercising of dogs in a cemetery culturally unacceptable with the public awareness and input a strong factor for a successful outcome.