



**Law
Commission**
Reforming the law

Burial, Cremation and New Funerary Methods

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The Law Commission

- Established in 1965 by statute.
- Recommend reforms to make the law fair, modern, simple and cost-effective.
- Government makes decisions on whether to take forward our recommendations.
- Project on Burial, Cremation and New Funerary methods arose through our 13th Programme consultation.



The three strands

- Burial and Cremation – underway – Consultation Paper in Autumn 2024
- New Funerary Methods – underway – reporting Spring 2026
- Rights and Obligations Relating to Funerals, Funerary Methods, and Remains – begins at the end of 2025.



Grave re-use

- Burial space is running short – is grave re-use a solution?
- Only option for members of some faiths groups.
- Could preserve burial grounds as active sites
- Some local authorities have powers to enable grave re-use.
- What protections would be necessary for public support?



Burial – regulation and maintenance

- Some limited rules in common, but different regulation in:
 - Church of England;
 - Private; and
 - Local authority burial grounds.
- Concerning stories about the impact of lack of regulation in private cemeteries.



Burial – closure, reopening and development of burial grounds

- Different laws govern development on disused burial grounds for private, Church of England and local authority burial grounds.
 - Should they be consolidated? Are they fit for purpose?
- Secretary of State has powers to close burial grounds by order.
- Church councils can transfer responsibility to local councils.
- Should it be possible to reverse this process?
 - Who would be responsible for maintenance if it were?

Cremation

- Law has been updated more recently
- Siting of crematoria
- Who can apply for cremation
- Unclaimed ashes
- Burial of ashes



New funerary methods

- Work is advanced on some new funerary methods:
 - Alkaline hydrolysis (among other names); and
 - Human composting, or natural organic reduction (among other names).
- Stakeholders have said a regulatory framework is needed to attract investment in methods which would offer choice.
- Considerations in a new framework – environmental, public health, human dignity?
- What elements should be regulated?



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Thank you – questions and
comments welcomed