Scotland's Graveyard Futures Symposium

HES Engine Shed, Stirling 5th November 2026, 10-4

A day of learning exchange and future strategising for owners, managers, Trusts, churches, professionals, community groups, local authorities and other stakeholders with a future role in caring for historic Scottish graveyards.

Scotland's historic graveyards are a rich and extensive built heritage and cultural resource that is diverse in its character and distributed in communities across the country. But the context for managing historic graveyards is currently undergoing the most significant change since responsibility was generally adopted by local authorities in 1974.

Many historic churches have ceased their traditional role as places of worship. Over 800 churches are in the process being sold into private or community ownership, which will involve changes in use, access and activities, as well as in the roles and character of maintenance and the relationships to graveyards within which they sit. However, not all churches have graveyards and not all graveyards have churches, and other things are also changing in civic society.

Churches which fail to find new owners or uses are at risk of abandonment, without maintenance or insurance, creating new challenges for effective graveyard management, public safety and heritage. This at a time when funding is very limited, traditional skills can be difficult to source and local authorities face resource challenges.

On the bright side, there is increasingly strong valuing of historic graveyards as a cultural heritage resource, and as greenspace for biodiversity and wellbeing, while new actors brought into play by changes in ownership bring new opportunities, resources and perspectives. Communities are increasingly empowered to take active roles. An appetite for partnership working may offer the best of all worlds, if suitably flexible frameworks can be established.

This event aims bring people who care about graveyards together to highlight good practice, share experience, knowledge and questions. There will be opportunities to contribute and discussion about future pathways and partnerships.

How to Participate

For best networking, come in person. The HES Engine Shed, Forthside Way, Stirling, FK8 1QZ is fully accessible and close to public transport. More information on directions Cost £50. There are bursaries available if cost is a barrier, please email office@arc-architects for information.

If that isn't easy, then you can join online for free. Book online and we will send you the zoon link.

Book with this Link

Graveyard Futures Symposium Tickets, Eventbrite

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PROGRAMME

9.30	Registration & coffee
10.00	**Welcome**
10.10	**Shared Visions for Scotland's Graveyard Futures?** *Tom Morton, Arc Architects*
Session 1:	**CONSERVING OUR HISTORIC GRAVEYARDS**
10.30	**Walls & Structures: Good Practice in Integrated Heritage Skills & Management** *Roddy Sneddon, Philippa Davies & John Purves, Fife Council*
11.50	**Reading Funerary Landscapes, Understanding Recent Legislation** *Dr. Susan Buckham, Edinburgh World Heritage*
11.05	**Memorial Management: Good Practice, Inspections & Risks** *Andy Wood, Historic Environment Scotland*
11.15	**Q&A Discussion**
Session 2:	**GREENING GRAVEYARDS**
11.30	**Green Graveyards: Good Practice in Biodiversity Management** *Catherine Lloyd, Tayside Biodiversity Partnership*
11.50	Other speaker biodiversity TBC
12.00	Other speaker wellbeing TBC
12.10	Q&A
12.30	**LUNCH**
Session 3:	**MANAGING CHANGE**
1.30	**Changing Church Ownership, Access & Responsibilities** *Claire Martin, Development Trust Association Scotland*
1.50	**Sustaining Heritage Value** *DJ Johnston, Scotland's Churches Trust*
2.05	**Supporting Community Involvement** *Katrina Hartnett, Perth & Kinross Council*
2.20	Q&A
Session 4:	**FUTURE PATHWAYS**
2.30	**Pop-Up Primer** An open opportunity for individuals and groups who have not presented to talk about their experience or situation and share what they have learned, what opportunities and challenges they face, or what support they need.
3.00	**Future Pathways Discussion** An open discussion on the potential to develop positive future pathways. Would there be benefit in providing integrated guidance on graveyards to the increasingly diverse range of stakeholders. Would template agreements help share good practice across the diversity of circumstance?
4.00	**CLOSE**