



## **Update 30.03.20: Access to Cemeteries during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Following the passing of new legislation by the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, the Council is required to take immediate action concerning access to its five Municipal Cemeteries:

Monkshill Cemetery, Newry  
Kilbroney Cemetery, Rostrevor  
Warrenpoint Cemetery  
Struell Cemetery, Downpatrick  
Lough Inch Cemetery, Ballynahinch.

As of today, and until further notice, all of these cemeteries are closed to the public for any reason other than to attend a funeral of a family member. When funerals are held within any of these cemeteries, access will be restricted to 10 family members, undertaker staff and essential Council staff. The hearse carrying the coffin and a family car will be permitted access to the cemetery where vehicular access is usually available.

Normal Council grounds maintenance of our cemeteries is currently suspended but as this situation progresses this will be reviewed. Once grounds maintenance service resumes within the Council, attention will be provided to each of the family plots. Whilst this current closure of our cemeteries continues there is a prohibition on any member of the public entering the cemetery to attend to their family graves.

We are aware that this news will be deeply upsetting. Please be assured that our staff, once able to return to the routine maintenance of the cemeteries, will quickly bring them back to the standard to which you are accustomed. We appreciate that our cemeteries are viewed as a sacred place.

We would advise that during this time, burials taking place within our cemeteries will have changes to normal working procedures as a means of protecting people attending funerals, undertakers and Council staff. These include:

- Only immediate family to attend the burial and limited to a maximum of 10 family members
- All family members must adhere to social distancing rules and people should not attend if they are symptomatic
- Family members will be asked to stay five metres from the grave for safety reasons
- Limiting the duration of grave side services to 15 minutes
- Our staff will be wearing additional personal protective equipment including coverall, face masks, glasses and gloves.

Your health and safety and that of our staff is paramount, and we appreciate your continued support.

---

### **Chief Executive, Marie Ward**

**Oifig an Iúir, Newry Office**, O'Hagan House, Monaghan Row, Newry BT35 8DJ  
**Oifig Dhún Pádraig, Downpatrick Office**, Downshire Civic Centre, Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick BT30 6GQ