

EFFORD AND WESTON MILL CEMETERIES

Bereavement Services



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I.1. The decision to relocate cremation processes to the new Plymouth Crematorium at the Park was taken through Executive Decision reference L10 18/19. Now that the new Crematorium is fully operational, a further decision was taken to enact the steps required (through Cremation Regulations 1930 as incorporated into the Cremation Regulations 2008) to formally cease cremation processes at Weston Mill and Efford (CSLCC02 24/25). Efford and Weston Mill are no longer functioning crematoria as of the 6 October 2024 and will be known solely as Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries.
- I.2. Both sites continue to be used for burial and memorialisation, including the Book of Remembrance Room.
- I.3. Since the Park opened, demand at Efford and Weston Mill has significantly declined. As a result, the service has temporarily stopped offering the use of the crematorium buildings at both sites, due to this lack of demand. This change is not unexpected. During pre-design consultation in August and September 2018 members of the public and stakeholders were asked about the potential future use of Efford and Weston Mill. The responses were clear: the majority of respondents were unlikely to use either site for funeral services or burial in the future.
- I.4. This decision does not impact on Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries, and they will remain open for burial and memorialisations, including the Book of Remembrance Room. Access to the niche room/columbaria will remain by appointment only.
- I.5. Therefore, the decision is to close the crematorium buildings at Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries permanently for the purpose of Bereavement Services

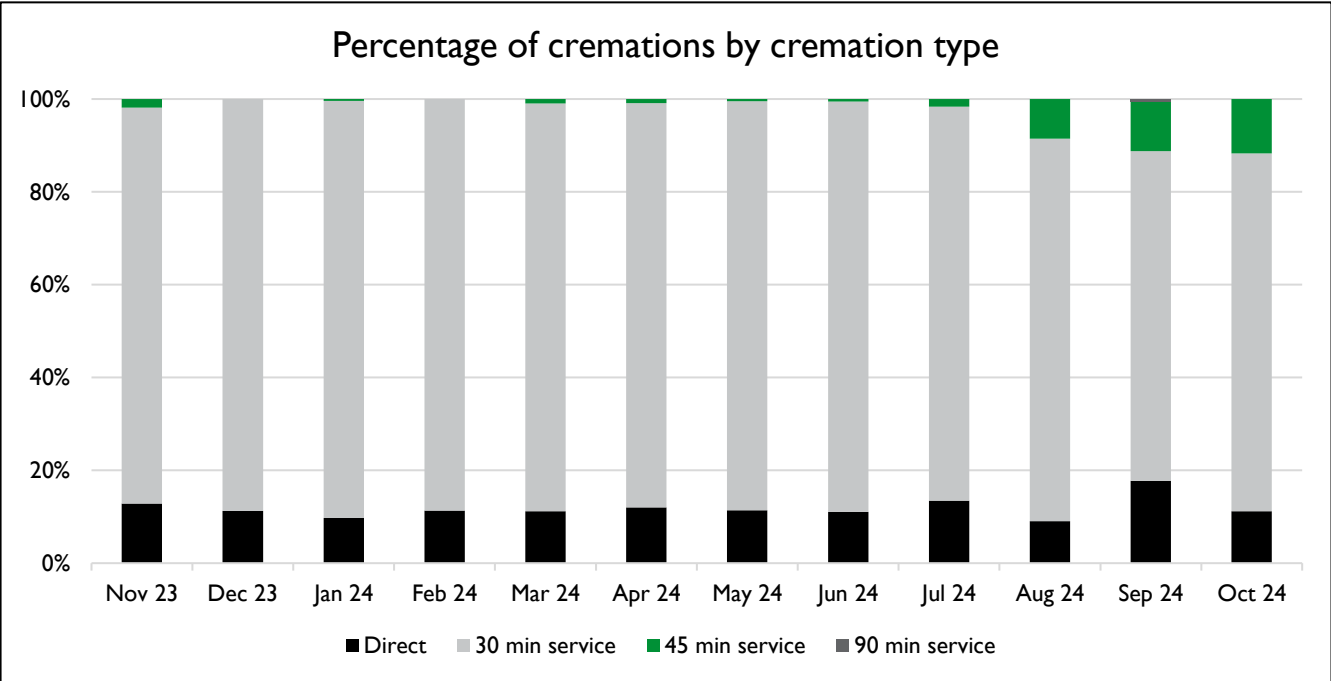
BACKGROUND

- I.6. The Plymouth Crematorium at The Park provides the citizens of Plymouth with a new, purpose built crematorium with associated facilities off Hays Road, Plympton. This investment was needed to provide a full upgrade to the equipment and to deliver quality facilities that meet 21st century customer expectations and capacity to meet future demands.
- I.7. The new facilities include three ceremony spaces, designed to meet the varying needs to suit the number of mourners and the desired style of the ceremony; along with high quality audio-visual equipment for the ceremony and to allow those who cannot be present to take part.
- I.8. The waiting areas, along with the flow of people throughout the building and outside spaces, have been designed to ensure that each funeral party receives the highest quality of experience when saying goodbye to their loved ones.
- I.9. Behind the scenes, the crematory has new cremators with the latest abatement equipment, and the required space and facilities to improve all elements of care for the bereaved as well as health and safety improvements for our staff.
- I.10. Outside of the buildings, the grounds have been designed to sit sympathetically in the environment, in the full awareness of the wellbeing benefits of green spaces. As well as landscaping including memorial gardens, there is appropriate car parking, road access, pathways and other appropriate external spaces.
- I.11. In addition – and in excess of the initial designs – there is a café and wake facility. Our market research tells us that people value somewhere to meet in the warm and dry either before ceremonies or when visiting the memorials of loved ones; as well as giving us the opportunity

to join in initiatives such as Compassionate Friends. The space is flexible, and would allow for either larger wakes, or smaller, more intimate, gathers.

- I.12. As was always expected, The Crematorium at the Park has replaced both of the crematoria at Efford and Weston Mill. Following EDs L10 18/19 and CSLCC02 24/25 Efford and Weston Mill are no longer functioning crematoria and ceased to be crematoria from the 6 October 2024.
- I.13. Both sites continue to be used for burials and memorialisation, including the Book of Remembrance Room.
- I.14. The location people are choosing for cremations has changed significantly since the opening of The Park. In the first few weeks of opening, there was a strong shift to The Park with 90 per cent of all booked cremations occurring at The Park instead. Demand for the other sites has continued to drop, to almost zero.
- I.15. As well as this shift from the older sites to The Park, the service has also seen a shift towards customers choosing longer services times at The Park, indicating that the improvement in the facilities is being reflected in customers choosing to spend longer there.

Figure I: Percentage of cremations by cremation type.



- I.16. This change is not unexpected. As part of the pre-design consultations run in August and September 2018 members of the public and stakeholders were asked about their potential future use of Efford and Weston Mill. Responses were clear. The majority of respondents were unlikely to use either site for funeral services or burial in the future and were also unlikely to book the crematorium buildings for any other purpose.
- I.17. It is however important to note that the facilities offered by Plymouth City Council Bereavement Services are not the only places in the city where a funeral service can be held prior to interment. Additional to the various churches and chapels across the city and surrounding areas, alternative venues include Boringdon Park Golf Club, Devonport Guildhall, Langdon Court, Mount Batten Centre, Ford Park Cemetery, Staddon Heights Golf Club, and The Moorland Garden (Yelverton).
- I.18. The ceremony building spaces at Efford and Weston Mill are costly to maintain. They are Victorian buildings with high ceilings and the heating costs alone are extremely high. It is therefore not cost effective to keep the buildings maintained, heated, and with sufficient staffing to be able to open them up. With this combined with the fact that demand has been at zero within a few weeks of The Park opening, and the recognised inability of these buildings to offer

modern facilities which are inclusive for all, it is proposed that Plymouth City Council consider closing the buildings permanently for the purposes of Bereavement Services.

PROPOSED CHANGES AND REASONS

- I.19. Decision to be taken: to close the crematorium buildings at Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries permanently for the purpose of Bereavement Services.
- I.20. This decision does not impact on the use of Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries. They will remain open for burial and memorialisations, including the Book of Remembrance Room.
- I.21. Currently access to the niche room/columbaria is by appointment only. This will remain unchanged.
- I.22. Options of any further alternative models or uses will be considered in a public consultation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- I.23. Do nothing: this option to keep the crematorium buildings open for the purpose of bereavement services, even for limited hours, was rejected because of the reasons above: the crematorium buildings are costly to heat and staff, within a context of changing patterns of use by customers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

- I.24. There is no negative impact forecast on the baseline net revenue position due to operating cost efficiencies.
- I.25. In the event of unforeseen revenue costs these will be fed into the preparation of the MTFP.

TIMESCALES

- I.26. Subject to any call-in period the service will stop formally offering the use of the crematorium buildings at Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries for funeral services in May 2025.
- I.27. A business case for the long-term future for the crematorium buildings at Efford and Weston Mill cemeteries will be brought forward in due course following an options appraisal.