

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 11 May 2023

Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Registration Scheme - Update

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Notes this update on the Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme;
 - 1.1.2 Agree changes to the fee structure for the Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme, as set out in paragraphs 4.15 and 4.16; and
 - 1.1.3 Agree to carry out further engagement with tour guide representatives to explore improvements to compliance with the donation scheme. The outcome of these discussions will be reported back to Committee by the end of the year.

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Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Registration Scheme - Update

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Cemetery Tour Operator Registration Scheme which became operational in 2021 and recommends revising the fee structure for tour guides. Committee is also asked to agree that discussions should be progressed with tour guide representatives compliance with the donation scheme could be improved. If approved, the outcome of these discussions will be reported back to Committee by the end of this calendar year.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Council owns and operates 43 cemeteries, churchyards, and burial grounds across the city. For ease of reference, in this report they are all referred to as cemeteries. They occupy around 77 hectares of ground.
- 3.2 The city has five historic city centre cemeteries in the UNESCO World Heritage area. Three of these (Canongate, Greyfriars and Old Calton) are Category A listed for the national significance of their monuments, memorials and walls. These cemeteries require expensive ongoing conservation and maintenance to keep them safe.
- 3.3 These cemeteries are hugely popular with visitors, with for example around two million people visiting Greyfriars annually, making it the third most visited free to enter attraction in Scotland. Other city centre cemeteries (such as St Cuthbert's and Old Calton) also receive significant annual footfall.
- 3.4 Whilst some of the visitors will be visiting independently, there is a significant number of organised tours which are commercial in nature, and these generate significant visitor numbers to the cemeteries. These tours are often organised by tour guide companies (employing individual tour guides), although some guides do work on their own.

Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme

- 3.5 In [September 2020](#), Committee agreed to introduce an Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration scheme, which includes a registration fee, Code of Conduct and a request for donated contributions for cemetery maintenance from visitors.

- 3.6 Recognising the costs associated with conservation maintenance and management, the purpose of the scheme was to generate income to offset the cost incurred by the Council for maintaining the historic cemeteries of Canongate, Greyfriars, New Calton, Old Calton and St Cuthbert's.
- 3.7 Prior to the development of the scheme, extensive discussions took place with relevant parties (including Edinburgh World Heritage, Scottish Tourist Guides Association and VisitScotland). At the time, tour guide companies made the case that one registration (and associated fee) per company (rather than per employee) would be reasonable.
- 3.8 The current annual registration fee is £90. As requested by tour guide companies, this fixed fee covers the cost of the registration, irrespective of the number of guides engaged by the organisation which registers. The Council bears the cost of administering the scheme, including providing tour guides with identification materials (passes and lanyards).
- 3.9 The scheme is underpinned by the introduction of the Cemetery Management Rules which explicitly state that commercial activity must be authorised by the Council.
- 3.10 In approving the scheme, Committee requested an update on its operation one year after it was introduced. This was delayed due to COVID-19, however an update is now provided below.

4 Main report

Financial costs in respect five cemeteries

- 4.1 The significant footfall in the city centre cemeteries causes wear on tear on pathways which were not designed to cope with the footfall.
- 4.2 For financial year 2022/23, the capital and revenue costs to the Council are shown in the table below.
- 4.3 The capital costs specifically relate to the cost of maintaining footpaths in the three cemeteries shown.
- 4.4 The revenue costs relate to the employment of a Cemetery Officer to manage Greyfriars Cemetery and to encourage compliance with the Registration Scheme. It was initially anticipated that this post would be funded from the income raised from the scheme.

CEMETERY	Capital Expenditure
Canongate Kirk	£38,750
Greyfriars	£24,713
St Cuthbert's	£23,000
Total	£86,463

	Revenue Expenditure
Cemeteries Officer	£34,000
Scheme Identification Materials	£553.35 (2021/22 – the costs for 2022/23 are not yet known)
Total Spend 2022/23	£121,016.35

Income from Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme

- 4.5 The Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme has now been in operation since financial year 2021/22.
- 4.6 To date, a total of 53 organisations have registered with the scheme, covering 311 individual tour guides.
- 4.7 The table below shows the income received by the Council in 2021/22 and 2022/23 from the Scheme.

	Income from Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme
2021/22	£3,428
2022/23	£3,785

Cemetery Tour Guide Operator Donation Scheme

- 4.8 When the scheme was introduced, donation points were also deployed within the cemeteries most popular with visitors.
- 4.9 [The terms of the scheme](#) require that each guide either:
- 4.9.1 Makes a 50 pence donation for each paying customer on their tour directly to the City of Edinburgh Council; or
- 4.9.2 Encourages each customer to utilise the contactless donation boxes ('tap points') placed in the cemetery to make a minimum 50 pence donation per customer to the City of Edinburgh Council.
- 4.10 Monitoring at Greyfriars Cemetery suggests that, despite it being a well visited location, tour guides are not highlighting the donation scheme to visitors.
- 4.11 The income received from donations to date is shown in the table below:

	Income from Cemetery Donation Points
2021/22	£2,859.11 (June 2021-June 2022)

2022/23	£2,033.12 (June 2022 – March 2023)
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4.12 Members will therefore note that if the costs in 2022/23 are replicated in future years without mitigation from income from the tours this is a significant cost pressure for the service.

Review of initial operation of the Scheme

- 4.13 Members will be aware that the Cemeteries Management Rules were agreed in 2022 and provide a further basis for managing commercial activity in the cemetery estate. The Cemeteries Officer manages this and there is some evidence that despite the scheme being in operation for some time, guides who are not registered continue to try and operate in the cemeteries.
- 4.14 However, it is clear that the Edinburgh Tour Guide Registration Scheme has not provided the level of income anticipated to meet the cost of maintaining cemeteries, particularly those with the highest footfall in the city centre.
- 4.15 It is therefore recommended that the Edinburgh Cemeteries Tour Guide Registration Scheme be revised, with an updated fee framework which:
- 4.15.1 Requires an annual registration of each individual company of £150; and
 - 4.15.2 Requires each individual guide to pay a registration fee of £120.
- 4.16 Future annual uplifts would be proposed as part of the fees and charges agreed by the Council annually in February, as part of the budget setting process.
- 4.17 Assuming the same number of organisations register and that the number of tour guides remains static, it is anticipated that the Council could generate circa £45,000 income per annum. This would be used initially to offset the maintenance costs associated with the cemeteries.
- 4.18 In addition, it is recommended that further engagement is undertaken with representatives of the tour guides to discuss how compliance with the donation scheme could be improved. The outcome of these discussions will be reported to Committee by the end of this calendar year.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 If Committee agree the report recommendations:
- 5.1.1 The revised fee structure will be introduced from 1 July 2023; and
 - 5.1.2 Officers will engage with representatives of tour guides to achieve improved compliance with the donation scheme. The outcome of this will be reported back to Committee by the end of this calendar year.

6 Financial impact

- 6.1 As noted in the main report, the current Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme has not generated the level of income anticipated when the scheme was introduced and the cost of operating the scheme and for repairs and maintenance for cemeteries continues to be met by the Council.
- 6.2 The changes proposed to the fee structure are anticipated to generate income of circa £45,000 if the number of registered companies and guides remains the same.
- 6.3 This will not meet the full cost to the Council but will make a more significant contribution to the costs currently being incurred.
- 6.4 It is proposed that an annual uplift in the fees should be agreed as part of the annual budget setting process in future years.
- 6.5 Officers will also engage with tour guide representatives on improving the donation scheme in order to increase the income received by the Council.

7 Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Stakeholder engagement was undertaken prior to the introduction of the Edinburgh Cemetery Tour Guide Registration Scheme.
- 7.2 If the recommendations of this report are agreed, officers will engage with tour guide representatives to advise of the changes to the fee structure and to seek feedback on how compliance with the donation scheme could be improved.

8 Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [City of Edinburgh Cemeteries and burials information](#)

9 Appendices

- 9.1 None.