

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ENVIRONMENT

CABINET - TUESDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2007

ARCHITECTURAL AND TECHNICAL

EXTENSION OF BURIAL AREA AT MAESTEG CEMETERY

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval to extend the burial area at Maesteg Cemetery by developing an adjacent plot of land in the Council's ownership, which was the subject of a compulsory purchase order for the reclamation of the Maesteg Washery site and the development of the new Maesteg Comprehensive School.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 There is a connection to 'Valuing our Valleys' and in particular to investment in places, capturing physical aspects that serve the local population. The extension to the cemetery will extend its life and provide the opportunity for the local population to be buried there until around 2040.

3. Background

- 3.1 It is estimated that, at the current burial rate, the available remaining burial area within Maesteg Cemetery will only last for a further 5 years. There is, therefore, an urgent requirement to develop a new burial area adjacent to the existing cemetery. The alternative to this would be for future burials from within the Maesteg community to take place at the next closest cemetery at Sarn. This arrangement would almost certainly be unpopular, preventing local people being buried in their community.

4. Current Situation/Proposal

4.1 Options for extending the cemetery

Although there is a significant amount of undeveloped land around the cemetery, each of the various parcels has constraints on them to varying degrees. The different areas, which are identified on a plan attached at **Appendix A**, are considered separately below.

Area A

This land is in Council ownership and conveniently situated adjacent to the entrance to the cemetery. The area would provide, approximately, a further 35 years burial space. However, the area has previously been utilised for quarry and mine workings. Trial pits have confirmed that it was subsequently utilised as a disposal site for coal waste and other uncontrolled waste. Waste of this nature is classified as contaminated and any reclamation of the site would fall under the control of the Environment Agency and would involve costly decontamination and stabilisation work before the site would be suitable for burial purposes. This ostensibly rules this area out as an effective/affordable option.

Area B

This parcel of land was part of the area compulsorily purchased for the Maesteg Washery Land Reclamation Scheme and the new Maesteg Comprehensive School development. The land has now been reclaimed, but is not required for the school development. Trial pits have confirmed that the land is suitable for burial purposes. The area would provide, approximately, a further 35 years burial space.

This site has potential; however, because the site is located to the north of the existing cemetery, it is further away from the entrance and other facilities. It is also adjacent to a lined watercourse and there could be issues with the Environment Agency, and this will require further discussion. A tarmaced access road, which was constructed for a farmer to access his land temporarily while the new school is constructed, splits the site and could be used as part of the development. Once the new school is completed, an alternative access will be available for the farmer. It is estimated the cost of providing a boundary fence, some car parking spaces, and improving the access road would be around £75,000. The cost of preparing individual burial sections will be funded from revenue budgets and will be undertaken in stages according to demand.

Area C

This is the most convenient area of land on which to extend the cemetery and would be the preferred option if it was not for the particular circumstances detailed in this part of the report. It is close to the existing main entrance, sexton's buildings, public facilities and utilities. The land is in the Council's ownership and would provide, approximately, a further 25 years burial space. However, there are serious ecological constraints associated with the land as it forms part of a much larger secondary tier Site of Importance for nature conservation referred to as MG – 3M Blaen Cwmdu.

The site has been subject to discussions with the Planning Department concerning its potential use as an extension to the cemetery. In addition, an ecological survey of the site has been carried out which concluded that it contained a variety of habitats within it which provide the potential to support bird species such as skylark, linnet and windchat and more significantly the marsh fritillary butterfly. The survey ranked the site as being of County Significance but if the existence of the marsh fritillary was confirmed this might increase it to Regional Significance. The land required would cover a small proportion of the whole Site of Importance.

Any approval would be subject to obtaining a licence from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). Preliminary discussions with CCW have established that prior to them issuing a licence to develop the site it would require, as a minimum, confirmation that the Council has explored the potential of utilising other land around the cemetery as an alternative burial extension area. As there is an alternative which is comparable in cost, then it is unlikely that CCW would issue a licence.

It is estimated that the cost of providing boundary fencing and an internal access road would be around £70,000. The cost of preparing individual burial sections will be funded from revenue budgets and will be undertaken in stages according to demand.

Area D

This is affected by the same serious ecological constraints as Area C, but it is not in the Council's ownership and the purchase cost would be added to the development cost, ruling this out as an effective option.

Area E

This is not in the Council's ownership and the purchase cost would be added to the development cost, ruling this out as an effective option.

- 4.2 The table outlines a summary of the issues relating to each of the sites under consideration.

	Areas of land considered				
	A	B	C	D	E
In Council ownership	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cost to purchase	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Adjacent location	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contaminated land	Yes	No	No	No	No
Environmental issues	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Reasonable cost to develop	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

- 4.3 The development of Area B would therefore present the least difficulty. Any issues relating to the adjacent watercourse will need to be finalised before an application is made for planning consent. Appropriate funding will be required in future capital programmes, probably in 2010/11 to develop the extension.

5. Effect Upon Policy Framework and Procedures Rules

- 5.1 There is no effect.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The land noted as Area B was compulsorily purchased for the Maesteg Washery Land Reclamation and School PFI scheme. Whilst the proposed utilisation of the land is not that which was originally envisaged under the compulsory purchase order, the Council can appropriate the land for this purpose in accordance with Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972. The appropriation of the land will mean that maintenance and management of the site will transfer from the Transportation and Engineering Department to the Architectural and Technical Services Department.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The cost of developing the extension to the cemetery onto land noted as Area B is estimated to cost around £75,000. A bid was made in 2006 for inclusion in future capital programmes for the extensions to Maesteg and Sarn Cemeteries. It was decided at that time that the work be funded from the capital minor works budget, but this has now been redesignated for planned maintenance. As the extension to the cemetery can be regarded as unavoidable, appropriate funding will be required in future capital programmes, probably in 2010/11 to develop the extension. The cost of preparing individual burial sections will be funded from revenue budgets and will be undertaken in stages according to demand.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the extension of the burial area at Maesteg Cemetery onto land noted as Area B subject to funding being available in future capital programmes and that the land be appropriated for this purpose.

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Background Papers:

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