

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : Carbon Offsetting – Salisbury Crematorium
Committee : Environment & Climate Committee
Date : 5 July 2022
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1. Introduction:

1.1. This paper introduces a new carbon offset scheme for all cremations, where a fee paid will be used to supplement Salisbury City Council's (SCC) treeing planting programme.

2. Background:

- 2.1. SCC's organisational carbon footprint identified the crematorium as our largest carbon emitter (approximately 70% of our total carbon footprint).
- 2.2. The scheme would be directed to the purchasing and initial maintenance (i.e. watering) of planting trees across Salisbury City Council (SCC) owned and maintained land to help offset carbon emissions created by the crematorium.
- 2.3. Users of the crematorium would contribute, via the cremation carbon offset fee to the treeing planting budget for the city.
- 2.4. The planting of these trees will be informed by SCC's forthcoming Tree & Ecosystem Strategy.

3. Climate Change:

- 3.1. SCC declared a Climate Change Emergency at Full Council on 17 June 2019
- 3.2. In October 2019 SCC produced its first Environmental Policy Action Plan (EPAP), which outlined how it would look to reduce its carbon emissions and encourage the wider community to do the same.

4. Cremation Carbon Footprint

- 4.1. In the UK 79% of people are cremated, which is around 470,000 people each year spread across the UK's 300 crematoriums. Out of these 300 crematoriums, there are approximately 606 cremator machines; 99% of which are gas powered. For every gas cremation, approximately 160-190kg of carbon is released into the atmosphere.
- 4.2. The table below shows the adult cremation figures at Salisbury Crematorium for the past three financial years based on the lower end of this assumption:

Financial Year	Cremations	Tonnes of CO2
2018/19	1,458	233.28 tonnes of CO2
2019/20	1,303	208.48 tonnes of CO2
2020/21	1,471	235.36 tonnes of CO2

4.3. Whilst SCC is giving consideration to long term solutions to reducing its carbon footprint in this area, such as replacing cremators with resomators (water cremation), this is a number of years away.

5. Carbon Offsetting

- 5.1. Trees are vital for our ecosystem. They play a key role in storing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. In addition, they are key to stabilising soil, reducing air temperature, humidity and flooding. As such, protecting, preserving and planting trees represents an opportunity for carbon footprint offsetting and tackling climate change.
- 5.2. Trees are known as carbon sinks because of their ability to store carbon. This is done through a process called photosynthesis. Trees absorb carbon dioxide through their leaves and turn them into sugars needed for them to grow. As the tree grows, it is able to lock away carbon in its branches, roots and trunk.
- 5.3. Although the carbon absorption capacity can vary from species to species, an average mature tree can store approximately 167kg of CO₂ per year, which is similar to the amount of carbon produced from a cremation.
- 5.4. Whilst this proposal will not offset the carbon emissions from the crematorium in their entirety, it will nonetheless help to make a positive impact.

6. Potential fees and their impact

- 6.1. The cost of purchasing an established tree is £100-£200 per tree. There is also the cost of associated sundries, such as stakes, guards, watering etc. that can cost between £100-£200 per tree depending on proximity to other newly planted trees, ease of access and so on.
- 6.2. If the purchase of a single tree was offered to families and friends of the deceased, this would be an expensive option, which may or may not be taken up, and so would provide little income and less community support.
- 6.3. It is proposed to include a smaller fee as part of the standard charging for all cremations. This would allow the Environmental Services Manager, to plan with some certainty, the number of trees that Salisbury City Council, would be able to plant annually.
- 6.4. With approximately 1400 cremations taking place at Salisbury Crematorium each year, the amount of funding that could be made available for tree planting is illustrated below:

Carbon Offsetting Fee (for every over 18 year cremation)	Tree Strategy Annual Budget	Estimated Number of Trees
£20	£28,000	140

- 6.5. All trees purchased would be ordered and planted once a year in SCC's planting season (usually February).
- 6.6. It is proposed to introduce this new fee in October 2023.

7. Recommendation:

It is recommended that

7.1. That the Committee agree to the Carbon Offsetting proposal as described in this report and set the fee at £20 per cremation.

8. Wards Affected: All

9. Background Papers: Nil

10. Implications:

- 10.1. **Financial:** As outlined in this paper
- 10.2. **Personnel:** None
- 10.3. **Environmental Impact:** As outlined in this paper
- 10.4. **Equalities Impact Statement:** None