

# 3. Ngā Whāinga Whānui me ngā Kaupapa here

## General objectives and policies

### 3.1 Land administration and provision

#### 3.1.1 Objectives

1. To administer and manage cemetery land and facilities in a manner that reflects their purpose and protects site values relevant to the vision in this plan.
2. To ensure future cemetery provision is adequately planned and provided for.

#### 3.1.2 Policies

##### 3.1.2.1 Land status

1. Designate the cemeteries covered by this management plan for cemetery / crematorium land use in the Wellington District Plan, with an underlying Natural Open Space Zone appropriate for managing the open space values and associated activities.
2. Close cemeteries under the Burial and Cremation Act once they reach capacity, to signify that they are no longer fully operational.
3. Classify closed cemeteries as historic reserves under the Reserves Act to recognise and protect the historic heritage contained within the cemeteries.

##### Explanation

Appropriate district plan designation and zoning is required to ensure that the cemetery land and associated land use is recognised in statutory documents and considered in consenting under the Resource Management Act. The district plan is currently being reviewed and will be revised according to new national planning standards.

There are no cemetery designations in the existing plan but it would be useful for setting land use parameters on cemetery development and operation, including for any closed cemeteries, where activities like burials and disinterments can still occur. Currently, all three cemeteries are zoned Open Space B (Natural Environment), which applies to land valued for its natural character and informal open spaces and

generally applies to areas where there are minimal structures and largely undeveloped areas, though the cemeteries contain many small-scale structures and some sizable buildings.

The Natural Open Space Zone under the new standards appears to be the most appropriate, given the need to recognise that the cemeteries are managed as public open spaces suitable for passive recreation and cemetery purposes, with heritage and natural environment values important for both types of use.

Once a cemetery reaches full capacity, the general focus of ongoing management shifts towards maintaining existing gravesites, even though some cemetery operations can continue, such as extra interments in family plots or, as at Karori Cemetery, the continued operation of the crematorium. As time passes the gravesites gain in historic value. Together, closure and historic reserve classification recognise the shift in emphasis towards heritage management.

When cemetery land is acquired, there is often more land than is immediately required and land within the purchased block may be unsuitable or surplus to requirements. Some areas will be held for future development or managed to provide a setting for the cemetery. These areas may be managed by leasing out for grazing.

##### 3.1.2.2 Cemetery capacity and planning

1. Ensure sufficient future cemetery capacity by continuing to monitor demand for different types of interment and periodically review forward planning against current and predicted trends.
2. Investigate the feasibility of interment methods that are more space-efficient than traditional burials and offer as options if acceptable to the community and there is demand.

##### Actions

- a) Investigate cemetery expansion options and acquire land suitable for cemetery use, to ensure adequate future capacity in Wellington City, invoking the Public Works Act for compulsory acquisition if necessary.
- b) Provide for ongoing investment in developing land held for cemetery purposes through the Council's Long-Term Plan.

**Explanation**

Predicted cemetery requirements indicate that the Council needs to acquire land to meet future demand. Karori Cemetery is already nearly full, with room for burials only into existing family plots and a limited number of new ash plots. Investigations in 2018 revealed that nearly all the remaining land at Mākara Cemetery is unsuitable due to being too steep (>17° gradient), unstable, flood-prone or not safely accessible. Only a 1.5-hectare area is suitable but is too small to justify the cost of bridging an intervening gully. Consequently, Mākara Cemetery, as it is currently laid out, is expected to reach overall capacity for ash plots from about 2038 and burial plots from about 2047. However, some new areas will need to be developed before then as some existing denominational areas will reach capacity sooner and new denominations and cultural groups are likely to request space.

The Council is investigating the suitability of various parcels of private land which could potentially meet the city's cemetery needs well into the future. Land suitability is assessed against various geotechnical, hazard, ecological, accessibility, archaeological, heritage and planning feasibility factors. If there is no suitable land at Mākara, the Council will look for another site to develop a completely new cemetery, though suitable land is not easy to find in Wellington. Once suitable land is identified, at least a decade is required to undertake the purchase, master planning, consenting and development of built and green infrastructure ready for use when needed.

Different interment types and techniques use different amounts of space. For instance, the area of a standard ash plot is about 16 percent that of a standard burial plot. Natural burial plots are somewhat larger in area but can be located on sites that are less suitable for traditional burials. Vertical burials use less space but are not feasible in Wellington where hard rock is often close to the surface.

Other options for space-saving include ash niche walls, which save ground space by being vertical, or interring ashes collectively in lawn-covered buried vaults with a single shared monument. The re-use of graves after a given period is another option,

common in some cultures. Scattering ashes involves making a shared space available that can be used numerous times. New techniques in body disposal are emerging, including rapid composting and resomation (water cremation), which could be potentially space-saving if there is demand.

**Optimising the efficient use of cemetery land needs to be balanced with the overall principle of providing for people's diverse beliefs and customs.**

**3.1.2.3 New cemetery master planning and landscape development**

1. Plan the staged, sustainable development of newly acquired cemetery land to ensure development is completed and well-established in time to meet demand.

**Action**

- a) Produce a master plan to guide and integrate planning of:
  - i. the future use and development of the existing Mākara Cemetery land, and
  - ii. the development of any newly acquired cemetery land.

**Explanation**

New land will need to be developed for cemetery use well in advance of when it will be needed. Time will be needed for planting to establish and for infrastructure to be installed. It has taken many years for the level of amenity now achieved in the existing area at Mākara Cemetery to develop.

The master plan will need to cover:

- the landscape and future land use considerations explained in section 4.3, if relevant
- general layout, circulation and spatial design
- landform modification and drainage
- built infrastructure (roading, water and power supply, public toilets, signage, fencing, footpaths etc)

- the potential for developing a focal area for visitors, perhaps including a suitable space for outdoor funeral or memorial services
- green infrastructure (planting of a tree framework, in particular, including quick growing, shorter-lived nurse planting in new areas to provide interim shade and shelter while taller, long-lived trees develop)
- if any land adjacent to Mākara Cemetery is acquired, a land bridge over an intervening gully to connect the existing cemetery and any new land

and take into account:

- universal accessibility design
- best practice in sustainable design
- the need for staged development and flexibility to adapt if demand changes.

The master plan should be developed by a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that the various functional requirements are well covered but within the context of designing a landscape to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of the bereaved. The team should include the following expertise: landscape architecture, engineering, mana whenua/Māori, cemetery management, horticulture, arboriculture, ecology and archaeology/heritage. Community consultation will also be required, including with the local community, denominational and cultural groups, and representatives from the disability sector.

In developing the master plan, it will be important to consider landscape management issues that have arisen at the Council's other cemeteries and aim to avoid repeating the same mistakes. For instance, avoid the potential damage that trees can cause on gravesites if the wrong species is chosen and/or planted in the wrong place.

The plan also needs to provide for efficient use of space, while acknowledging that uptake of plots will vary between denominational areas.

**3.2 Customer service****3.2.1 Objectives**

1. To maintain quality assured standards of record-keeping, customer support and information in providing cemetery services.
2. To recognise and respect diversity of people's beliefs and customs around death and facilitate personal choices as much as possible in delivery of cemetery services.
3. To support historic research by maintaining accurate and easily accessible cemetery records.

**3.2.2 Policies****3.2.2.1 Respecting diversity**

1. Recognise and, where possible, provide for the diversity of beliefs, customs and personal wishes that people may want to practice in farewelling and commemorating their dead.
2. Allocate suitable areas at Mākara Cemetery to denominational and cultural groups for their burials and/or interments, in consultation as to specific requirements.
3. Consult denominational groups on whether they wish to provide information about their customs to help other cemetery visitor understanding.
4. Continue to advise and support those bereaved who wish to make their own funeral and interment arrangements by providing clear information about statutory requirements, cemetery service options and the associated costs.

**Explanation**

Respect for the dead and for the bereaved is a fundamental principle that underpins customer service in the cemeteries. People's beliefs about death and wishes about ceremonies and commemoration are deeply personal and very diverse. Having choices can make a huge difference to those who are planning ahead for their own death and to the bereaved making arrangements on behalf of a deceased person. Providing for choice and

personalisation allows family and friends to farewell and commemorate the person they have lost in a way they feel is fitting for that person. It is important in the grieving process. Within the parameters of functional cemetery management, such as standard specifications for layout and maintenance, individual choices will be accommodated if possible.

The Burial and Cremation Act provides for religious denominational areas to be set aside and for denominations to fence their areas and build a mortuary church or chapel at their own expense. The Council also defines sections for specific cultural and other groups. The current types of areas are listed at right.

Increasing cultural diversity in Wellington may see applications for more areas in future. Denominational areas fill at different rates, which means that more land needs to be developed and maintained in the short term, compared to a cemetery where everyone is buried together and the space developed and filled progressively. The Council will continue to provide separate areas and accommodate special requirements where possible, such as a particular orientation of graves.

Having different denominational areas can reduce the risk of people with differing beliefs giving offence to neighbouring or nearby plot holders. Where denominational groups wish, information they supply to help understanding of their customs will be made available online, but generally not on site, to minimise the amount of signage around the cemetery.

In recent years more people have been seeking to make their own funeral and burial or cremation arrangements. For some, this is simply a preference to plan and manage the occasion in their own way. Others seek a low-cost alternative to using a funeral director due to financial circumstances. In helping those making their own arrangements, the Council does not provide a funeral service, as arranging funerals is not considered council core business.

Nevertheless, these families have been very recently bereaved and can find it difficult to make decisions, so a high standard of clear, sensitive guidance on the processes involved and options available is required.

#### **Areas currently set aside for specific groups**

Karori and Mākara cemeteries have ‘public’ interment areas, which are non-denominational. There are children’s sections at Karori and Mākara cemeteries, and an infant’s section at Karori Cemetery. Tawa Cemetery was an Anglican churchyard. The other two cemeteries currently have areas set aside for specific denominations or cultural groups as follows.

#### **Karori Cemetery**

- Church of England
- Roman Catholic
- Greek Orthodox
- Soldiers
- Jewish

#### **Mākara Cemetery**

- Assyrian
- Chinese
- Greek
- Hindu
- Māori (Ngā Iwi o Te Motu Urupā)
- Muslim
- Orthodox Jewish
- Pacific Island
- Plymouth Brethren
- Poon Fah
- Progressive Jewish
- Roman Catholic
- Russian Orthodox
- Serbian Orthodox
- Tung Jung
- Seyip
- Soldiers

### **3.2.2.2 Burial and cremation rights and options**

1. All existing interments are regarded as being in perpetuity unless the deed to the plot says differently.
2. Continue to provide for interments and cremations.
3. Continue to sell perpetual rights of interment for burial and ash plots.
4. Continue to sell natural burial plots (single plots in perpetuity only).
5. Continue to sell pre-purchased plots, subject to the right of burial being limited to 50 years from the date purchase if the plot remains unused.
6. If a pre-purchased plot has not been used within 50 years of the date of purchase, make it available for repurchase for immediate use or for a further 50-year pre-purchase period, taking reasonable steps to contact and offer the plot to the plot owner’s family first.
7. Ensure explanatory information about perpetual and, if approved under action (b) below, non-perpetual exclusive rights of interment<sup>4</sup>, is clearly and prominently explained in interment information online and in other formats.
8. Consider setting plot purchase prices to reflect perpetual and non-perpetual rights of interment.
9. Where a body has been disinterred from a single plot, for whatever reason, make good the plot, as required, and make available for re-use.
10. Within the parameters of functional and space-efficient cemetery management, provide choices of interment plot types and groupings.
11. Continue to provide suitable areas in cemeteries for scattering ashes, and offer as a chargeable service, the option of staff helping the family with the scattering or undertaking the scattering on behalf of the family.<sup>5</sup> (See Rules 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 also.)

12. Consider offering other methods of disposing of human remains, provided the methods meet statutory requirements, particularly if the methods enhance the sustainable management of the cemeteries and meet the wishes of the deceased and family.

#### **Actions**

- a) Investigate the option of selling non-perpetual rights of interment to burial and ash plots and develop proposed terms and conditions, including:
  - i. The period of non-perpetual right and appropriate location, taking into account religious/cultural preference
  - ii. Options for extra interments in the plot during the specified period of interment, such as spouse
  - iii. Pricing options
  - iv. Provision for any ceremonial disinterment requirements
  - v. Options on how the disinterred remains will be treated, such as cremation, bones held in an ossuary (see Appendix I, Glossary)
  - vi. A system of maintaining family contact information
  - vii. Options to offer ashes, headstones and plaques back to families and what will happen if families do not want them or cannot be traced
  - viii. Options for families to re-purchase the right of interment for a further non-perpetual period
  - ix. Options to offer re-purchase for re-use of the plot to family members first
  - x. The requirements for all interment records associated with the plot, including photographic, to be kept permanently
  - xi. Developing an application form and a deed of right of interment for re-usable plots.

Report back to the Council for approval within three years of the date of this plan.

<sup>4</sup> On purchase of a plot, a ‘Deed of Exclusive Right of Interment’ is issued.

<sup>5</sup> This can be a helpful service when family are not able to do this.

- b) Subject to council approval of the proposed terms and conditions, offer the non-perpetual right of interment option to those buying a new burial or ash plot.

#### **Explanation**

The Burial and Cremation Act allows plots to be sold for specified periods as well as in perpetuity. To date, the Council has sold cemetery plots in perpetuity except in the following two situations:

- Some lawn cemetery plots at Mākara were historically sold for a 50-year period from the burial date. The records of exactly which plots and the dates need to be verified from archived records, which will be done as part of researching Mākara Cemetery history (see 4.3.4). The re-use of these plots will be considered in the next review of this management plan.
- When interment plots are pre-purchased, the right to burial ceases if the plot is not used within 50 years. This provision ensures that plots will not remain empty in perpetuity, as might happen if a family was unaware that a plot had been pre-purchased.

There are issues associated with perpetual burial rights. Though the purchaser or descendants are responsible for the plot's maintenance, most families eventually cease to maintain the graves. Yet for the price of the one-off fee, the Council remains responsible for maintaining access to the grave in perpetuity (as required by statute) and gradually takes on a role in maintaining the grave as time passes (section 3.2.2.4). Inevitably cemeteries containing plots in perpetuity become full and more land must be found. Suitable land can be difficult to find (see section 3.1.2.2). To increase future capacity and more sustainably manage cemetery land over time, the Council is proposing to investigate an option whereby people can purchase a plot knowing that it will be re-used after a specified period. In the consultation survey on this plan,<sup>6</sup> 58 percent of respondents definitely or somewhat supported the idea, which indicates there would be uptake of such non-perpetual rights of interment. Overseas examples of non-perpetual rights of interment will be researched

in developing proposed terms and conditions. All existing interments are regarded as being in perpetuity unless the deed to the plot says differently.

The Council will consider whether to introduce differential pricing to better reflect the difference in long-term maintenance liability for the Council associated with plots in perpetuity. There are numerous factors to consider, including cemetery maintenance and development costs, the requirements for different types of interment and principles of social equity, cultural sensitivity and affordability.

Disinterment of burial remains or ashes at the request of family is not uncommon and can help to increase cemetery capacity by enabling second use of plots. Sometimes the remains are disinterred and placed deeper in a grave to make room for another interment in a family plot. At other times a family might wish to reinter the remains or scatter ashes elsewhere. In some instances, special ceremonial requirements need to be observed, such as disinterments of military personnel.

People's choice of both burial and ash plots may be influenced by a range of factors, including the setting, memorial design preferences, environmental considerations, cost and grouping. Some areas are defined by the plot type including, the beam cemetery, plaque lawn, ash berm, ash circle, rose garden (at Karori Cemetery), niche walls and the natural burial area (see Appendix I: Glossary.) Some areas are also defined by social grouping, such as the denominational and cultural areas (see 3.2.2.1), the children's section and the military services areas. Several ash scattering areas may be provided to avoid build-up of ash and enable choice.

Natural burials are offered as a more environmentally friendly alternative to other traditional methods, based on enhancing natural decomposition by avoiding use of chemical treatments and restoring the site to native bush (see Appendix I: Glossary for more). Double plots within the natural burials area are not allowed because a subsequent burial into the second plot, perhaps many years later, would disturb

the progressive forest restoration of the site. Ashes are not allowed as they do not conform with the natural burial philosophy.

New burial methods and technologies are emerging, such as rapid composting instead of cremation (see 1.4, cemetery trends). Their suitability at Wellington cemeteries will be considered.

#### **3.2.2.3 Remembrance**

1. Permit the personalised design of monuments, including the placement of QR codes, within the Council's size specifications and the specifications of the New Zealand Standard for Headstones and Cemetery Monuments.
2. Offer as a commemorative option, the purchase and planting of a native tree<sup>7</sup> into planting areas at the cemeteries (see also 4.3.2, action (d)).
3. Assess requests for commemorative features, such as seats or sculptures, to be installed, taking into account that the features should:
  - i. meet a need in the particular cemetery, and
  - ii. be of appropriate type and style to the cemetery, the site setting and any relevant landscape development plans.

Suitable commemorative features will be installed for a fee on the understanding that the feature will be maintained for a minimum of 20 years and, if removed after that time, reasonable steps will be taken to notify those who paid the fee.

4. Allow tributes and decorations to be placed on the headstone and associated concrete beam of a gravesite in a lawn cemetery area (see Appendix I, Glossary) and on non-lawn gravesites at Karori and Tawa cemeteries, provided they do not:
  - i. encroach on or obstruct access to any other plot or communal area
  - ii. require electricity, whether from cemetery power supply systems, battery or solar sources
  - iii. disturb the tranquility of the cemetery environs or cause offence to others.

5. Encourage the use of environmentally friendly tributes and decorations to reduce rubbish and pollution, including encouraging local florists to use biodegradable fixings and wrappings in bouquets for cemetery use.

6. Support remembrance days at cemeteries as appropriate.

#### **Actions**

- a) Investigate sources and options of environmentally friendly and affordable tributes and decorations, and the feasibility of selling direct to the public or partnering with community groups or businesses interested in producing and/or selling suitable products. Implement if feasible.

#### **Explanation**

The latter decades of the 20th century saw a trend towards more uniform monument design, as seen in the Public 1 section of Mākara Cemetery. This trend was partly driven by a desire to reduce long-term maintenance costs and partly by the idea that a cemetery environment should not visibly reinforce social differences, particularly financial. However, uniformity is unappealing to many families for whom the memorial is an important part of the grieving process and a last chance to recognise the personality and significance of the deceased person. At Mākara the headstones and plaques/tablets must comply with specifications of size and materials to ensure they will fit within the layout, be reasonably durable and safe. The standard is set by the New Zealand Standard NZS 4242: 2018 Headstones and Cemetery Monuments. Within these parameters, greater creativity and personalisation is now permitted than in earlier decades. At Karori Cemetery, when new headstones or plaques are occasionally installed, to mark a new burial in a disinterred plot for example, a design in keeping with the character is encouraged.

The Council often receives requests for other forms of memorials such as trees or seats to be placed in the city's parks and reserves, including the cemeteries. These requests are managed under the *Commemorative Policy 2006*, but the policies

<sup>6</sup> The survey was carried out from 6th November to 14th December 2020 as part of the consultation on the Draft Cemeteries Management Plan 2020.

<sup>7</sup> A list of species to choose from will be provided to ensure the species used are suited to the site conditions and fit with the Council's restoration planting programme.

in this plan will determine the approach taken in the cemeteries. Planting single commemorative trees into lawn areas has proved impractical as there is limited space, tree health can be affected by mower damage and trees can impede access for further burials. Instead, trees can be planted in commemorative groves of native restoration planting or as enhancement species of long-lived tall tree species within naturally regenerating bush areas<sup>8</sup> (see 3.3.2.2, natural environment). Ground that is unsuitable for burial plots can be used for these commemorative plantings.

The master planning of the new cemetery area could provide for some commemorative planting areas that will help to establish the new landscape framework (see 3.1.2.3). Features such as seats will only be considered if there is a need for them.

It is accepted that people like to place tributes and decorations on plots but there are practical reasons for managing their use.

- As a matter of respect, they should not encroach onto other plots, and will be cleared away if they do.
- The placement of tributes and decorations is restricted to the headstones and immediate concrete beam foundation in the lawn cemetery areas at Karori and Mākara cemeteries because of the way those areas are laid out and managed. The actual graves lie under the lawns that separate the long concrete beams on which the headstones are placed. These graves are sold on the basis that the families will be responsible for the upkeep of the headstones and the Council will be responsible for maintaining the communal lawn areas in between. This approach reduces the long-term maintenance issues that have arisen at the Council's older cemeteries when families have gradually ceased to maintain traditional gravesites. If tributes and decorations, including flower gardens, are placed on or blow onto the communal lawn areas they obstruct access for the mowers and the

machinery required for interments, disinterments and installation of headstones, and they can get entangled in the mowers. Therefore, decorations, including suitably sized pot plants, are restricted to the headstones and concrete foundation.

- In the areas at Tawa and Karori cemeteries where the entire gravesite is demarcated and the responsibility of the family, tributes and decorations can be placed anywhere within the gravesite. However, the same principle applies if they encroach on public areas that the Council maintains such as pathways and lawns, as they can obstruct maintenance.
- Decorations can blow around the cemetery, creating an untidy appearance and potentially polluting the natural environment. Plastic decorations are a particular issue as they do not biodegrade. However, the Council does not intend to ban their use at this stage because these types of decoration are a more affordable option and a ban could disadvantage low-income families. Use of biodegradable tributes and decorations will be encouraged to start the transition away from use of plastics. The Council recognises that biodegradable products are not easy to find and not always affordable. The Council will look into options to make them more easily available and will also explore the potential for growing wildflowers and other plants at the cemeteries that can be picked (see 4.3.2 (a) (ix) and 4.3.2 (c)).
- New technology, such as in-built videos in headstones, is starting to occur overseas. It is not encouraged here due to the potential for disturbing other visitors, potential demand for power supply, pollution from abandoned batteries and potential for installations to break down and require removal in the longer term if families no longer maintain them.

After removing items, cemetery staff try to contact families and hold the items for a period so they can be reclaimed.

### 3.2.2.4 Gravesite maintenance

1. Communicate clearly that plot purchasers, their representatives or descendants ('the family') are responsible for maintaining:
  - i. All private structures erected within the burial plot, as stipulated in the Consolidated Bylaw
  - ii. The gravesite, except those parts of the gravesite in lawn cemeteries that the Council maintains in lawn. The lawn areas cannot be maintained by family.
2. Continue with the following council responsibilities to:
  - i. Maintain reasonable access to gravesites
  - ii. Maintain any communal spaces, such as lawns in lawn cemetery areas
  - iii. Construct and maintain structures used by more than one burial plot, such as concrete beams or niche walls
  - iv. Carry out necessary safety or emergency work without prior notification to the family
  - v. Make reasonable attempts to contact the family before undertaking safety or restorative work on gravesites.
3. Continue to require that anyone intending to carry out maintenance and/or repair work on headstones and other gravesite structures must first obtain a permit from the Council.
4. Provide and promote clear guidelines and instructions on best practice non-invasive care of headstones, plaques and gravesites (see 3.3.2.4).

#### Explanation

Under the Burial and Cremation Act, purchasing a plot for burial entitles the purchaser, purchaser's representative or successor to access and maintain the plot and memorial in perpetuity, or for a period specified at purchase. The Council's Consolidated Bylaw holds the plot purchaser or representative

responsible for maintenance of structures on gravesites. Many people are unaware of the family responsibility so this needs to be highlighted in the Council's cemetery information.

Problems arise when the deceased's descendants have ceased to maintain a gravesite and cannot be traced or cannot afford the cost of repair and maintenance. In these situations, the Council may decide to step in. It has the power to make safe, take down or remove any monument or headstone that endangers people but generally does little more, due to limited resources. The Burial and Cremation Act is currently being reviewed and it has been noted that the legislation is somewhat ambiguous about who is responsible for upkeep.<sup>9</sup> The Council will continue with its existing policy on this, subject to future review if the legislation is clarified.

Another issue is that headstones and other gravesite structures have been damaged by inexpert, though well-meaning, maintenance efforts carried out by both families and volunteers who don't realise some cleaning products and tools can damage and adversely affect the long-term durability. For example, abrasive tools and cleaners can permanently damage surfaces, and paint can cause later maintenance problems if not consistent with heritage conservation best practice. Under the Council's Consolidated Bylaw, permits must be issued before any maintenance and repairs are carried out so that advice can be given, the methods approved and a record kept of work undertaken. To simplify the permission process, permits are issued to cover a list of specified activities and/or for a time period, such as the following examples:

- For families, gentle cleaning, tidying and weeding of their forebear's gravesite according to the non-invasive gravesite care guidelines (see (4) above) for a period of up to 3 years
- For volunteer groups, approved tasks for specified gravesites over a specified time period, such as one year.

<sup>8</sup> In Wellington, regenerating native bush often lacks the tall long-lived canopy species of mature native forest. Planting these species can enhance forest restoration by increasing biodiversity.

<sup>9</sup> New Zealand Law Commission (2015). R134 Death, Burial and Cremation: A new law for contemporary New Zealand, p.130

### 3.2.2.5 Quality records management and information systems

1. Manage the cemeteries according to industry best practice and maintain ISO 9001 quality management systems accreditation.
2. Maintain secure, up-to-date, accurate and publicly accessible cemetery records of all council-managed cemeteries, including plot photographs where possible.
3. Provide easily accessible information in both online and printed formats to explain burial, cremation, memorial and other customer service rights, options, procedures and costs.
4. Provide a streamlined, all-hours online booking system for funeral directors.
5. Provide timely and sympathetic advice and support to cemetery customers, including those bereaved who wish to arrange and run their own funerals.
6. Continue to provide a cemeteries office at Karori Cemetery as an easily accessible physical location for information, advice and administration.

#### Actions

- a) Complete the digitisation of historical paper-based cemetery records.
- b) Complete the current Cemetery Management System (CMS) replacement project.
- c) Develop a new user-friendly cemeteries website, integrated with the CMS project and compliant with the New Zealand Accessibility Charter.
- d) Continue to add photographs of all plots to the online cemetery records.
- e) Develop a 'virtual tour' of each cemetery.

#### Explanation

The Council's cemetery operations have been ISO 9001-accredited since 2001. The accreditation recognises that all administration and operational procedures are formalised through quality and work instruction manuals that reflect industry best practice and are implemented consistently and to a high standard.

The Council has statutory responsibilities to ensure all official certification and paperwork is completed properly before burials and cremations can take place. It must also keep an accurate register of all burials and cremations in its cemeteries and make the register available for a small fee. A proportion of older cemetery records remain in paper-only form, which limits accessibility and risks the loss of unique historic records. The old paper-based maps and records are being checked and digitised.

Bereavement can be a time of great stress, when it is difficult to make decisions, often at short notice. Providing clear information and timely service helps both the bereaved and the funeral sector.

The Council's Cemeteries Management System (CMS) is a database used by cemetery staff to book cemetery services and to generate and issue instructions for works to be undertaken on cemetery grounds. It is also the repository for recording and maintaining records of those who have been interred in one of the council's cemeteries. The current CMS provides limited online public access to online records and spatial mapping information due to outdated technology. A project is currently under way to replace the existing CMS. The new CMS will improve the service to funeral directors by allowing them to make provisional bookings online at any time. People wanting to organise funerals directly will still be able to do so by phoning the Karori Cemetery office or the Council contact centre.

The new CMS will be integrated with a refreshed online search tool designed to be more welcoming through a simplified structure and improved user experience. The tool will cater better for the growing number of people interested in finding family graves and researching genealogy by linking through to the cemetery records. The Mākara Cemetery records are already available online and linked to online mapping and this will be extended to all cemetery records as the digitisation progresses. Access to the search tool will reduce the amount of staff time required to answer records enquiries and help people to locate plots. There is demand for people who cannot visit the cemeteries to be able to see the overall environment

and individual gravesites by way of an online 'virtual tour', to help with purchasing plots, viewing the graves of loved ones and exploring cemetery heritage.

Recent improvements in mobile technology will enable staff to access and update information directly into the new CMS system from their devices when in the field. It means less need for the cemetery office to be moved to Mākara Cemetery as had once been envisaged. The existing office at Karori Cemetery has the advantage of being more accessible from elsewhere in the city, including by public transport, for funeral directors and the bereaved making arrangements. Karori Cemetery is also where most history/genealogy researchers are likely to go in the foreseeable future.

## 3.3 Heritage

In the context of this plan, heritage includes the built structures, plants and introduced features that are of historical, social, aesthetic or scientific significance within the cemeteries. This term also encompasses the intangible values that cultural groups may associate with a place. The focus of natural environment values, which are also a form of heritage, is on significant components of indigenous and native ecosystems. All these aspects of heritage are interwoven within the cemeteries and the distinction between them is not always clear. For instance, native bird species are part of our natural environment but have come to depend on exotic as well as native plants for food. Exotic plants are also part of the unique character in some parts of the cemetery landscapes.

Cemeteries are valued worldwide as places that reflect the history of a locality. Wellington's cemeteries hold some of the city's oldest built heritage and stories of the past.

### 3.3.1 Objectives

1. To identify, recognise, protect and enhance appreciation of the significant heritage features and values of the cemeteries.
2. To maintain and enhance the essential landscape character of each cemetery in a way that preserves a sense of tranquility and respect for the dead and is compatible with heritage values.

3. To protect and, where appropriate, restore indigenous biodiversity and indigenous ecosystems in the cemeteries, including freshwater ecosystems.

## 3.3.2 Policies

### 3.3.2.1 Landscape character and amenity planting

1. Consider and maintain the complex combination of built, planted and natural features that contribute to the unique landscape character of each cemetery.
2. Ensure that a landscape management plan is part of any site development/maintenance and heritage conservation planning done for the cemeteries. This will ensure an integrated approach that will help avoid ad hoc actions and guide consistent management over time.
3. Manage vegetation change to enhance the amenity of the cemeteries while protecting built heritage features from unacceptable vegetation damage.
4. Identify and manage planting that has historic heritage value within each cemetery to ensure it continues to be a characteristic feature. When maintaining and/or replanting the identified planting, take into account the need to manage any potential for it to be a weed risk.
5. Plant trees to maintain the tree framework in the cemeteries but only where the roots, at maturity, will not damage graves, monuments or cemetery infrastructure.
6. Allow self-sown trees and shrubs to regenerate only in areas being managed as natural environment areas.
7. Consider the potential for providing food sources for native birds and lizards when selecting amenity planting species.
8. Seek horticultural, arboricultural and heritage advice to guide planting and vegetation management.
9. Balance demand for high-maintenance amenity planting with the need for cost-effective maintenance regimes.

**Explanation**

Each cemetery has a distinct character due to the different setting, scale, age and mix of built and natural features. This difference reflects each cemetery's historic development, creating a distinct sense of place and experience for visitors.

Within each landscape, vegetation is an important element that constantly changes over time, as plants grow, change in form and, eventually, get old and die. In cemeteries this change needs to be managed, as plants have the potential to damage gravesites and built infrastructure, yet they form an important and valued part of each cemetery's character. Excessive or ill-placed growth can also mask underlying structural problems, such as slumping or erosion, and compromise the visitor experience by obscuring graves and headstones. Vegetation also provides visual and sensory amenity, shade and shelter, and ecosystem services, such as filtering rainfall or providing wildlife habitat.

Planted vegetation may also have heritage values that should be considered. For example, a lemon tree planted at a gravesite may be indicative of a person or culture. Other planting may provide evidence of a particular aesthetic or popularity of certain species at any given time. For example, the Norfolk Island pine planting at Mākara Cemetery reflects that native specimen tree planting is a relatively new phenomenon.

Public feedback indicates that display planting, like the ash plot rose gardens at Karori Cemetery, is popular and people request that more be provided. Such planting requires considerable maintenance. The Council generally favours lower-maintenance planting options than gardens to save on costs. However, attractive seasonal variation in shrubs and trees can be considered.

Planned and deliberate landscape management over time is required to ensure the right balance is found between protecting built heritage and public access, maintaining the complex character of the landscape and its planting, and ensuring cemetery management and maintenance is affordable for the city.

**3.3.2.2 Natural environment**

1. Identify and assess the areas of existing or potential ecological value in each cemetery and manage to protect and enhance that value, prioritised around:
  - i. Improving ecological connectivity with nearby natural areas and wildlife corridors
  - ii. Improving freshwater habitats and fish passage
  - iii. Enhancing species diversity.
2. Recognise the spiritual and cultural values that people associate with nature.
3. Manage exotic plants that have invasive weed characteristics but also heritage value in the cemeteries' context, by confining specimens to the immediate area of historical association and, where appropriate, preventing seed development.
4. Manage weeds and animal pests in accordance with the Council's *Our Natural Capital Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* and the *Greater Wellington Regional Pest Management Plan*, with particular attention to identified Key Native Ecosystems and Significant Natural Areas within or adjoining the cemeteries.
5. Use eco-sourced plants when planting native trees and shrubs for forest restoration and commemorative tree planting purposes, including for natural burials.
6. Support, in consultation with mana whenua, research and community efforts to identify lizard populations, assess threats and identify habitat requirements at the cemeteries.
7. Continue to regularly clear and dispose of wind-blown rubbish, particularly plastics. Encourage cemetery visitors to use biodegradable tributes and decorations.
8. Implement best practice water-sensitive design in any future development, to protect freshwater values.

**Action**

- a) Investigate the potential for annual commemorative tree planting into new native tree groves or into existing areas of regenerating native vegetation in the cemeteries to enhance the biodiversity with long-lived 'heritage' species.

**Explanation**

Within the cemeteries there are areas where natural values predominate and/or there is potential for restoration of indigenous biodiversity and indigenous ecosystems, such as undeveloped gullies and hillsides. These areas have intrinsic ecological value and provide a setting that symbolises the cycle of life and supports peaceful contemplation. Bush areas can also provide suitable places for ash scattering or commemorative native tree planting. The emphasis is on indigenous biodiversity but it is recognised that some exotic plant species in the cemeteries can contribute to the natural environment by, for instance, providing wildlife habitat or helping to filter rainfall runoff. Conversely, some exotic plants in the cemeteries might have historic value but potentially be a weed problem.

In Māori mythology lizards are regarded as the guardians of the underworld. We know very little about the lizard populations in the cemeteries. However, graves probably provide good lizard habitat, as they have plenty of basking surfaces and crannies for cover, which should be considered when undertaking maintenance on graves.

Weeds and pest animals are managed as part of the Council's city-wide pest management programme in collaboration, where possible, with volunteers. Weed management is prioritised across the city to protect the areas of highest natural value from the most ecologically damaging weeds. Therefore, new priorities for weed control in the cemeteries would depend on new funding being attached to this management plan. Any such funding would be prioritised to Karori Cemetery where there is potential for weeds to spread and adversely affect natural values in the adjacent Otari-Wilton's Bush. Animal pest control includes possum bait stations, rabbit control, small mammal trapping at Karori Cemetery and goat

control near Mākara Cemetery. The short grass and sunnier slopes in the cemeteries are ideal rabbit and hare habitat and there are ongoing problems with their droppings and diggings causing damage and upsetting visitors. Rabbits are hard to control in public spaces due to public health and safety considerations. Toxins are a last resort in public spaces and rabbit numbers do not warrant their use in the cemeteries. Night shooting is the best option and carried out regularly at Karori and Mākara cemeteries.

Natural and biodegradable materials such as fresh flowers and woven flax are encouraged as a more environmentally friendly way to decorate graves instead of fake flowers, toys and other decorations that are often used. Unfortunately, a proportion of artificial decorations blow away and end up in vegetation and watercourses, causing plastic pollution. This material can end up on neighbouring properties and in Wellington Harbour or Cook Strait where it contributes to marine pollution and threatens wildlife. An integrated approach to freshwater values at a broader catchment management scale is being developed by the Whaitua te Whanganui-a-Tara Committee and the recommendations may be applicable in due course.

Traditionally, people have sought to plant commemorative trees as individual specimens within mown lawn settings. As explained in section 3.2.2.3 that approach is generally unsustainable but there is an alternative option of grouped commemorative planting, either into newly created groves or as enhancement planting within the natural areas in the cemeteries. These plantings could be an opportunity to bury ashes and plant a tree or, simply, a symbolic planting to help restore nature. Longer-lived, taller-growing species such as podocarps and pukatea could be used, including species that are now rare in the city area. An allocation of plants could be included in the Council's annual native plant nursery production. To ensure the plants are well-suited to their sites and maintained for a period, a landscape plan of commemorative planting areas, including appropriate species, is required.

### 3.3.2.3 Heritage recognition and protection

1. Recognise that the cemeteries are within a broader cultural landscape of great significance to mana whenua and work with mana whenua to protect its mauri.
2. Identify the heritage values of the cemeteries.
3. Protect and manage the cemeteries in a manner reflecting their historic value and significance in consultation, where possible, with any directly affected groups or individuals.
4. Ensure that a heritage conservation plan is prepared, reviewed and regularly updated for each of the cemeteries, using appropriate multi-disciplinary expertise and ensuring that consistent heritage management principles and methodology are applied in all.
5. Integrate the outcomes of the heritage conservation plans into master plans of Karori and Mākara cemeteries.
6. Research, record and disseminate historical information about the cemeteries, including the intangible cultural heritage values of different denominational and cultural groups associated with the cemeteries.
7. Protect and manage historic buildings and features according to recognised conservation principles and policies.
8. Ensure that an archaeological management plan is prepared for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga approval and regularly updated for cemeteries associated with pre-1900 activity and features.
9. Document all conservation work the Council undertakes at the cemeteries using photographic and written records to illustrate the initial and completed state.

#### Action

- a) Research with mana whenua in relation to land held for cemetery purposes the pre-colonial history, post-colonial history from the Māori perspective and any cultural values associated with the land and recognise according to mana whenua wishes.

#### Explanation

Karori and Tawa cemeteries hold significant heritage values. The monuments and graves mark the lives of prominent people, those who died in historically important events, such as world wars, the 1918 flu epidemic and the 1953 Tangiwai disaster, and collectively reflect Wellington's history. Several buildings and structures at Karori Cemetery are entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero as category 1 or 2 heritage places and are scheduled in the district plan. Aside from these individually listed and scheduled structures, the heritage values are currently not recognised or protected by statutory means, except that Karori and Tawa cemeteries are archaeological sites under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. The more recent Mākara Cemetery has a shorter history but its heritage significance will increase with time, and its archaeological values are still to be assessed.

Knowledge about the heritage values of the cemeteries is fundamental to identifying and recognising their significance, seeking their protection and planning appropriate conservation and management approaches. Research will be important to fill knowledge gaps. The cemeteries largely reflect Wellington's colonial and post-colonial history but it should also be understood in the context of the preceding Māori occupation and culture.

The cemetery heritage conservation plans will need to cover all aspects of heritage (see introduction to 3.3) and take into account practical day-to-day landscape management and the development that may still occur, such as wayfinding signage, accessibility improvements and planting. Therefore, it is important that the heritage conservation plans are prepared and reviewed using multi-disciplinary expertise including: historic research, heritage conservation, landscape architecture, cemetery

management, vegetation management, horticulture and interpretation. A separate or associated archaeological management plan is recommended to ensure pre-1900 features and sites are recognised and protected when planning and undertaking work within the cemeteries.

### 3.3.2.4 Graves and monuments

1. Maintain and manage all historic graves, monuments and surrounds in accordance with the ICOMOS charter<sup>10</sup> and according to the Council's maintenance and repair guidelines for graves (see action (a) below).
2. Require any person or group, including plot owners, doing maintenance and repair on any graves, monuments and grave surrounds to obtain prior approval via a council permit and for the work to be consistent with the maintenance and repair guidelines (see action (a) below).
3. Manage vegetation around graves and monuments to protect them from damage and to maintain adequate visual and physical access.
4. Maintain the military services sections in the cemeteries to the standards required in Veterans' Affairs guidelines.
5. Regularly inspect graves and monuments for damage from vandalism or vegetation and for signs of general decay. Address any immediate or pending issues promptly to avoid further damage or more extensive repairs in the future.
6. Prioritise repairs and maintenance on graves as follows:
  - a. First priority:
    - i. Immediate health and safety hazard due to the risk of headstones, walls or fences collapsing, including elements liable to collapse if people climb on them
    - ii. Damage resulting from council maintenance, particularly where families are regularly visiting graves
    - iii. Damage that has resulted from inappropriate/unauthorised repairs/work.

- b. Second priority, potential health and safety hazard: Where preventative action now will prevent graves that are structurally sound from becoming dangerous due to continued growth of trees and/or roots nearby, or by erosion.
  - c. Third priority, significant gravesites: Have historic and/or aesthetic significance and, while not being dangerous, are in need of repair because elements are cracking, broken or lost. Significance assessed according to the heritage conservation plan for each cemetery.
  - d. Fourth priority, damaged gravesites: Graves which have no special historic and/or aesthetic significance, are not dangerous but need repair because elements are cracking, broken or lost.
7. Wherever possible and practicable, seek to recover the cost of repairs from descendants or family, unless the repair was required because of council damage.
  8. Consult interested parties, such as family, provided they can be contacted, before beginning major restoration work.
  9. Securely store and catalogue all grave and monument fragments that are no longer in situ, to be available for restoration work.
  10. Keep records of all historic assets within the cemeteries and any that may be stored off-site. Keep up-to-date notes of damage and remedial work, and document all significant alterations.

#### Actions

- a) Develop new maintenance and repair guidelines for graves and monuments to be used in heritage management and conservation work in all the Council's cemeteries.
- b) Publish simple 'how-to' guidance in online and pamphlet formats to inform family members and volunteers about how to carry out simple, non-invasive cleaning and maintenance of graves, noting that permits are required (see (2) above).

<sup>10</sup> ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites which has an International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. ICOMOS New Zealand has its own charter, Te Pumanawa o ICOMOS o Aotearoa Hei Tiaki i Nga Taonga Whenua Heke Iho o Nehe, which is widely used by the heritage sector in New Zealand.

- c) Approach the Ministry for Culture and Heritage to investigate the potential for a partnership approach in managing the memorials of prominent people in the cemeteries.

#### **Explanation**

The graves and monuments are the most notable historic features of our cemeteries. They are a valuable historic record and a source of great human interest. Many are fragile and vulnerable to damage. Council uses maintenance and repair permits to maintain high standards of work and to track who has carried out work if damage occurs, which can be upsetting for families (see also 5.3.1). Access to the graves is important for both families and interested members of the public. Therefore, it is essential that reasonable access be provided to graves so that visitors will not be compelled to clear vegetation and potentially damage the graves.

The Council works with Veterans' Affairs to ensure the military services graves (or 'war graves') are maintained to high standards that meet public expectations. Veterans' Affairs provides funding that enables a higher level of maintenance, including regular cleaning of headstones.

The proposed new maintenance and repair guidelines will be based on the principles of the ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, widely accepted in New Zealand and Australia as providing a benchmark for conservation practice. The guidelines will recognise the over-riding principle of doing the minimum required, as the best guarantee of retaining the authenticity of each grave. In the words of the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand, "*do as much as necessary, and as little as possible*".

Conservation work is planned from this starting point, with levels of increasing intervention as required: Doing nothing, cleaning, weeding, general maintenance, stabilising, repairing, restoring and reconstructing (see Appendix IV). Most graves will require cleaning and general maintenance at one time or another but work at a higher level of intervention should be assessed according to the priorities and

long-term maintenance programmes determined under each of the cemetery heritage conservation plans. In setting those priorities the views of submitters on this plan should be taken into account.

Most ranked the following four types of work to protect the built heritage of old gravesites in the following order: Removing trees where roots are causing damage, maintaining a representative sample of graves from different eras and cultures, maintaining graves from historically important events, and maintaining graves of famous people.

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage arranges for the maintenance of former Prime Minister Peter Fraser's memorial and the Marble Arch memorial at Karori Cemetery. However, there are memorials of other nationally notable people in the cemetery and there has been community concern that the standard of care is inadequate. It is possible the Ministry could work with the Council to help maintain other memorials.

#### **3.3.2.5 Buildings and infrastructure**

1. Maintain to a good standard the built infrastructure required to manage and develop the cemeteries and provide for visitor amenities, including roading, water supply, power supply, signage, public toilets and utility buildings.
2. Ensure that a current conservation management plan guides any additions and alterations to:
  - Existing heritage-listed buildings or structures
  - Existing buildings and structures with heritage value that are currently not scheduled in the district plan nor listed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.
3. In preparing any plans for alteration or addition to any building with heritage values, consult:
  - Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga if the building is currently or potentially listed on the Heritage New Zealand/Rārangī Kōrero List
  - The Council's heritage advisors if the building is currently or potentially scheduled in the district plan.

4. Ensure that any new buildings or structures complement the heritage values and landscape character of the relevant cemetery and of individually heritage-listed and scheduled buildings or structures in their vicinity.
5. Ensure that new buildings or alterations and additions to existing buildings are of a scale and design that is in keeping with the landscape character of the relevant cemetery and the immediate site setting.
6. Ensure that all relevant consents (building/resource) for work covered under 3.3.2.5 (1) and (2) are applied for.
7. Advise denominational and cultural groups that they are responsible for the financing and ongoing upkeep of any buildings and structures within their areas of the cemeteries.

#### **Explanation**

The provision of well-maintained infrastructure is an essential part of the Council's responsibility to provide cemeteries. Maintenance of the built infrastructure is managed through separate asset management systems so the provisions in this plan are primarily to give direction about the appropriate use, statutory context and proposals for significant new development or upgrades, particularly where additional expenditure might be involved.

The built infrastructure varies between the three cemeteries. There is very little at Tawa Cemetery other than fencing, and considerably more at Karori and Mākara cemeteries. At Karori, the focus is largely on maintaining older infrastructure in the context of a heritage landscape. At Mākara, the infrastructure is more recent. Much focus over the next 10 years will be on development associated with any land the Council acquires for cemetery expansion (see 3.1.2.3).

The Burial and Cremation Act provides for religious denominations to build a mortuary church or chapel within their denominational area, at their own expense. Currently there are two such structures - the Jewish Prayer House and the Greek Orthodox Chapel - both at Mākara Cemetery.

## **3.4 Visitor experience**

### **3.4.1 Objectives**

1. To enable the bereaved to farewell and pay tribute to their dead in a supportive atmosphere.
2. To enable the public to explore and appreciate the cemeteries in a manner that is appropriate to places of burial.

### **3.4.2 Policies**

#### **3.4.2.1 Public use**

1. Support grieving families and friends by maintaining a tranquil atmosphere with places for contemplation and facilities for tending graves.
2. Encourage and provide for informal passive recreational activities that are appropriate to the respectful and peaceful character of the cemeteries (see Part 5, Rules for more on types of activity).
3. Support those interested in tracing family history and researching genealogy by:
  - i. Making all cemetery records readily available online
  - ii. Providing clear plot location information linked to interactive online digital mapping
  - iii. Continuing to add photographs of the gravesites to each plot location record
  - iv. Improving wayfinding at the cemeteries (see 3.4.2.3).
4. Promote the cemeteries to Wellington's residents and visitors as pleasant and unique open spaces of historic interest.

#### **Explanation**

It is a priority to ensure the atmosphere and amenities in the cemeteries are appropriate for visits related to mourning and remembrance - the primary purpose of cemeteries. These visits include attending funerals at the chapels, attending burials, scattering ashes, unveiling headstones and tending graves. Feedback indicates that visitors coming for these reasons appreciate a peaceful, respectful atmosphere with opportunities for contemplation.

People are also increasingly visiting cemeteries for other reasons, including walking, dog walking, relaxation, exploring, learning about local history, researching genealogy, cycling and even geocaching. Provided that an appropriate atmosphere is maintained for the bereaved, this more diverse use benefits the wider community by providing a type of public open space valued for peacefulness, interesting landscape character and historical associations. Recreational use also helps prevent anti-social behaviour through the passive surveillance provided when more people visit the cemeteries. More diverse use requires management to avoid or minimise inappropriate or conflicting behaviour. For instance, disrespectful and potentially damaging mountain biking behaviour on and around gravestones has been reported. Additional guidance about activities is set out in the Rules section.

Interest in family history and genealogy has been increasing for some years. A growing number of people visit the cemeteries in person to see the records that are still held in paper-only form and to find family plots. There is a growing expectation among those who can't visit in person to be able to search cemetery records online and, preferably, 'virtually visit' the cemeteries by seeing images of the graves and the cemetery environment. While the Mākara Cemetery records are available online, most of Karori Cemetery records are still in paper form. Consequently, the cemetery office staff are spending the equivalent of nearly two days a week answering genealogy information requests and helping people to locate plots, because people have difficulty finding their way around. A fee is charged for requests involving multiple plots.

Two current projects - digitising the cemetery records and mapping database and the replacement Cemeteries Management System (see 3.2.2.5) - will provide an improved service. These projects will enable researchers to find information for themselves, without a fee, and more easily locate plots through the improved mapping. The number of requests should drop significantly, freeing up staff for core cemetery services. By supporting the interest in cemetery records, the Council also hopes to foster

people's interest and involvement in volunteering opportunities and maintaining graves and headstones.

### 3.4.2.2 Access and amenities

1. Maintain a practicable network of drive-on and pedestrian access-ways as required in each cemetery to service the gravesites, facilities, utilities and special features of the cemeteries.
2. Make access ways as accessible as possible, where practicable and cost-effective, provided that the integrity of heritage and landscape character is not compromised.
3. Make known that family and friends of the deceased who cannot reach the gravesite without assistance due to limited mobility can request personal assistance with access from cemetery staff.
4. Provide site furniture to facilitate safe access, amenity and appropriate recreational activities in the cemeteries.
5. Where appropriate, develop and maintain tracks additional to the paths and access ways needed for cemetery use to provide complementary recreational opportunities linked where possible with the Council's adjacent or nearby track network.
6. Provide information about public transport and other transport services to the cemeteries.

#### Explanation

A system of roadways, drives and paths is required to enable visitors, service vehicles and cemetery staff to reach gravesites. This system is broadly organised in a hierarchy from wider, paved main routes to narrower throughways and paths, which may be paved or maintained in lawn, depending on the age and character of the section in the cemetery. A 10 km per hour speed limit is set on the vehicle access way for the health and safety of visitors on foot and to preserve a quiet respectful atmosphere. The roadways need to be wide enough to allow for a vehicle to stop with enough room to help passengers with mobility problems including transfer in and out of wheelchairs.

Accessibility is an issue at the cemeteries. A comparatively high proportion of the bereaved are elderly and less mobile. The extent to which universal accessibility standards can be achieved within the existing gravesite areas is limited by the historical layout of graves and access ways and the topography. For example, where the access way is up a steep slope, regrading or constructing steps would impact the adjacent graves. The wider drive-on routes bring visitors within a certain distance of graves but some have difficulty with access beyond that point due to the sloping terrain. Installation of handrails is often unfeasible because they can restrict machine access for preparing new interment plots or installing headstones, obscure the visibility of adjacent gravesites and obstruct physical access to graves for maintenance. New burial areas are laid out to follow the contours where possible to ease access gradients but the topography is often a limiting factor. Levelling new burial areas is another option but would increase environmental impacts and development costs. Recognising the accessibility constraints, cemetery staff provide assistance on prior request, such as temporarily placing ramps and mats to provide improved surfaces for wheelchairs.

Site furniture is the small-scale items such as seats, water outlets, rubbish bins and drinking fountains that are specifically provided for visitor convenience. Regularly spaced seats provide resting places for visitors who are frail and/or have limited mobility as well as places for contemplation. Water is provided at the entrance to the Ngā Iwi o Te Motu Urupā to cater for customary practice and at intervals through the cemetery for washing monuments and tending graves.

*The Open Space Access Plan* (OSAP) is a strategy to strengthen and improve Wellington's open space access network. It sets out to provide opportunities for recreation and tourism, ensure that tracks cater for a range of user interests and abilities, and provide a network that enables residents to enjoy the city's open spaces. All three cemeteries are destinations that can be incorporated into walking and cycling routes and local loops, which is a focus area in the Council's open spaces and recreation framework, *Our Capital Spaces*. The cemeteries have a unique function within the Council's reserves and open spaces that brings

different functional and user requirements to its access network. Therefore, the cemetery access rules vary from the OSAP, in particular, stipulating that tracks in cemeteries will not be open for biking unless specified (see Part 5, Rules).

People already enjoy exploring the two larger cemeteries within the existing cemetery access network. Karori Cemetery is already well-linked to the adjacent reserves and tracks and there is potential to develop tracks on areas unsuitable for cemetery use at Mākara Cemetery, potentially linking into the wider track network.

### 3.4.2.3 Wayfinding, signage and interpretation

1. Use on-site signage, map boards and way markers to guide visitors at each cemetery about:
  - i. The layout, main circulation routes, and entrances
  - ii. The location of main facilities such as chapels, toilets and drinking water
  - iii. The location of denominational and cultural areas
  - iv. Restrictions on types of recreational use
  - v. The heritage and natural environment values
  - vi. Recreational opportunities, including connections to nearby open spaces.
2. Determine a logical hierarchy of site circulation routes and entrances at each cemetery to guide the development and maintenance of wayfinding signage and mapping.
3. Ensure that signage is:
  - i. Sufficient to enable visitors to find their way around the cemeteries but does not create visual clutter
  - ii. Is of a scale and design to complement the distinctive character of each cemetery
  - iii. Is of high-quality design and durable materials.
4. Develop interpretation material to help visitors appreciate the unique heritage at each of the cemeteries, and its significance.

5. Provide easily accessible wayfinding and interpretative information about the cemeteries in a range of formats, including on-site, online and printed.

#### Action

- a) Develop a high-level visitor experience strategy for council's cemeteries, with guiding principles for developing individual cemetery interpretation plans, covering:
  - i. Key messages and themes including interweaving nature/culture/history/sense of place
  - ii. The target audiences and how to engage with them
  - iii. How the interpretation will fit with and complement other Council interpretation plans, for example the neighbouring Otari-Wilton's Bush interpretation, the existing Bolton Street Cemetery interpretation, and at places of memorial such as Pukeahu National War Memorial Park.

#### Explanation

Wayfinding and interpretation needs differ between the cemeteries according to their comparative size, complexity of the landscape and their cultural and heritage values. As a basic principle, good wayfinding and well-placed signage can greatly enhance the visitor experience. It can be distressing if people cannot find their way to key locations at times of bereavement and frustrating if plots are hard to find for those tracing family history. Good wayfinding needs to be based on a logical hierarchy of main and side routes that helps visitors to orientate themselves and find destinations without having to signpost every path and feature.

Interpretation enhances people's understanding and appreciation of the places they visit. Feedback from engagement indicates there is interest in having more interpretation about the cemeteries, especially the two older ones. In developing interpretation, it is important to recognise the great diversity of people buried in the cemeteries and the different combination of location, history and cultural associations at each cemetery. They each tell a local story but their significance and points

of interest are often interwoven with other stories about nearby places or themes of city-wide and national significance. The Council is developing an Interpretation Strategy to guide storytelling in the Council's public spaces. Within this framework, the proposed high-level Visitor Experience Strategy will ensure that the cemetery interpretation brings out what is unique about each cemetery and how each can contribute to wider interpretation themes. More detailed interpretation and wayfinding plans would then be developed.

A balance is required between the need for on-site signage and the intention to keep the cemeteries as simple places of peace and calm. Too much signage and written interpretation can be upsetting for the recently bereaved, if it makes a cemetery feel more like a park and the people buried there a part of its historic fabric. Interpretation needs to be sensitively worded, subtly designed and located and the potential for virtual interpretation considered, including through QR codes. Improved online mapping through the replacement Cemeteries Management System (see 3.2.2.5 action (b)), will also provide the GPS co-ordinates of plot locations, together with wayfinding directions, to help visitors find their way.

#### 3.4.2.4 Public events

1. Provide and/or support public remembrance events at the cemeteries that offer an opportunity for people to come together to remember loved ones, subject to considering the impact on the cemetery environment and on cemetery visitors of:
  - i. The proposed scale
  - ii. The frequency
  - iii. The temporary nature of infrastructure and services required to provide the event
  - iv. Compatibility with other users and the possible need to temporarily restrict access to some areas
  - v. Cumulative effects of the event alongside other events happening in the course of a year.

#### Explanation

Large public events are not generally considered appropriate in the cemeteries except where the focus is on remembrance in a context of community support

and shared experience of loss. The value of these sorts of communal events in the grief process for some people is recognised. For example, some funeral homes offer annual remembrance services, as do hospices. Some denominational groups already gather at the cemeteries on certain holy days to remember their dead and no special booking or application process is required because those events are relatively private and small in scale. However, if a larger public remembrance event is contemplated then its impact will need to be considered in the context of what is appropriate in a cemetery environment. Events could take the form of quite formal occasions with prayers or something more informal like open days on popular visiting days, such as Mother's Day or special denominational days, when help with transport could be offered and the chance to buy fresh flowers to place on graves. An annual remembrance event around Matariki is another possibility suggested during engagement on this plan (see 4.3.6 action (a)).

Other events that may be held in the chapels, such as funerals or weddings, or interments or memorial installations outside are regarded as private events and managed through the cemetery bookings and permits system (see Part 5, Rules).

## 3.5 Community and partnership

### 3.5.1 Objectives

1. To plan for and work in partnership with mana whenua.
2. To collaborate with local, regional and national stakeholders who have particular interest in the delivery of cemetery services, to maintain high standards and respond to changing needs.
3. To encourage and support appropriate involvement of individuals, community groups, neighbouring land owners and organisations in working towards the vision of this plan.
4. To promote awareness of the cemeteries as places that contribute to Wellington's sense of place and people's quality of life.

## 3.5.2 Policies

### 3.5.2.1 Partnership with mana whenua

1. Encourage Treaty partners and the wider Māori community to help determine how this plan can be implemented, including:
  - Working in partnership to co-manage sites of significance to mana whenua
  - Supporting the practice of tikanga.
2. Ensure that mana whenua are kept informed about cemetery management through regular contact and reporting.
3. Use and encourage more use of te reo Māori in relation to place names and the key tikanga concepts carried into this plan.
4. Maintain a list of kaumātua and Māori clergy who are available to support Māori whānau at times of bereavement.

#### Action

- a) Develop a partnership that will enable both Taranaki Whānui and the Council to fulfil and plan for their mutual undertakings in the Memorandum of Understanding, including for Taranaki Whānui to realise their plans for the Opau Urupā.

#### Explanation

The Council's relationship with mana whenua<sup>11</sup> is managed through Memoranda of Understanding with the mandated iwi entities, Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated, based on principles of partnership, participation and protection of taonga and cultural heritage. The Council has a responsibility to take account of the principles of Te Tiriti - Treaty of Waitangi and to improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

The development and management of the cemeteries has been largely based on a European approach that does not necessarily reflect mana whenua's relationship with the land. This was partly recognised in the opening of the Ngā Iwi o Te Motu Urupā in 2011 at Mākara Cemetery, which came about in response to comment received from the Māori community. People who request interment in the urupā are likely to be of

<sup>11</sup> Mana whenua means customary authority exercised by an iwi or hapu in an identified area.

Māori descent (whakapapa), partners and whāngai, or any person who has an affinity with the Māori culture. Wellington City Council will not refuse a request for burial in the urupā.

The way in which mana whenua wish to collaborate in managing the cemeteries and recognising Māori protocols and customs needs to be explored and planned for further. There may also be opportunities for active partnership in activities such as habitat restoration. Supporting iwi capacity and capability to be active partners is an aspect to be considered.

The Council's Te Tauihu: Te Reo Māori Policy aims to support more everyday usage of te reo Māori. Recognition and use of Māori place names is one way to do this but so too is the use of Māori terms for natural elements and tikanga.

Māori whanau who are distant from their own tribal area and/or do not have local connections may wish to contact kaumātua or clergy for support, such as karakia, during grieving and attendance at the cemetery.

The Opau Urupā is owned and managed by Taranaki Whānui but the Council can provide expertise, advice and practical help in planning, management and maintenance of the urupā, delivery of cemetery services and record-keeping. A partnership arrangement will be progressed between the Council and Taranaki Whānui for the Opau Urupā.

### 3.5.2.2 Collaboration with customer service stakeholders

1. Maintain good working relationships with customer service stakeholders and customer groups through:
  - Regular communication and information updates
  - Inviting feedback and suggestions.
2. Consider opportunities for appropriate partnerships with external entities that may enable an expanded range of cemetery services and/or revenue sources.

#### Explanation

Customer service stakeholders include funeral directors and monumental masons who deal with the Council on behalf of the bereaved. The stakeholders also include official organisations that the Council deals with in delivering cemetery services, such as the Health Department, the Births Deaths and Marriages section of the Department of Internal Affairs, Veterans' Affairs and Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Customer groups include denominational and cultural groups, including mana whenua, who have designated areas within the cemeteries.

Regular contact and proactive communication with these stakeholders and groups is important to ensure customer service is responsive and meeting changing needs. The Council works together with the funeral sector to make this happen and also works directly with families who choose to make their own arrangements. A fundamental principle is to recognise the importance of every burial or cremation running smoothly and in a way that feels right for the bereaved. The replacement online Cemeteries Management System currently being developed is the result of stakeholder and customer group feedback (see 3.2.2.5).

The natural burials area at Mākara Cemetery is an example where cemetery services were extended through partnership. The Council works with a not-for-profit organisation, Natural Burials, which provides the information and requirements about natural burial and organises the bookings. The Council carries out the actual burial. Natural Burials was set up in response to concerns about the environmental impact of traditional burial and cremation practices. The uptake was slow at first but demand has increased in recent years. There may be other partnership opportunities in future that reflect a new trend or demand in the way human remains are dealt with. There could be also opportunities for ancillary services that are not considered core business for the Council. For instance, there have been requests for catering and for family who live at a distance to be able to order a tidy-up of the grave and placement of fresh flowers on a special day of significance.

### 3.5.2.3 Community partnership

1. Encourage, support and provide opportunities for individuals and groups of all ages, and businesses, to help manage and maintain the physical environment, public use and general awareness of the cemeteries, and help monitor outcomes.
2. Encourage and support volunteers and volunteer groups who have a mandate to undertake proposed work by:
  - i. Communicating regularly and having clear agreements (usually Memoranda of Agreement) that define responsibilities and set out the group's objectives, health and safety requirements, and how achievements will be measured
  - ii. Working with volunteers to plan their activities realistically, taking into account the time needed for ongoing tasks such as maintaining planting
  - iii. Providing practical advice, training and, subject to council resourcing, help with tools, materials and storage
  - iv. Promoting collaboration and sharing of skills and resources between different volunteer groups
  - v. Recognising and celebrating volunteers' efforts and achievements.
3. Maintain open communication with volunteers, volunteer groups and communities and constructively exchange feedback, knowledge and new ideas about how best to work together to achieve goals.
4. Work with other agencies and organisations, such as Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Veterans' Affairs, Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association - Te Ratonga Kahui Morehu a Tu o Aotearoa, and the New Zealand Society of Genealogists, to co-ordinate overlapping responsibilities, interests and opportunities for collaboration.
5. Work collaboratively with communities and interest groups to co-design and explore funding options for projects within reserves.

#### Explanation

In recent years increasing numbers of individuals, community groups, businesses and nearby residents have volunteered their time and energy to help manage the Council's open spaces. There are numerous benefits. More is achieved than the Council could achieve alone and volunteers often get huge satisfaction from helping to care for places they care about and contributing to a 'greater good'. Communities become more resilient as people meet and work towards common goals, potentially being better placed to help each other in hard times and emergencies.

Community involvement in cemeteries has been spurred most by people's interest in the heritage, as seen through the Tawa Historical Society's involvement at Tawa Cemetery and the recently established Friends of Karori Cemetery (see 4.1 and 4.2). There is potential for more community involvement with the growing interest in genealogy and history and the increasing popularity of cemeteries as places of recreation and refuge. Natural environment volunteering such as animal pest control and restoration planting is another opportunity.

The Council needs to invest time and resources into managing volunteer partnerships to foster a mutually beneficial relationship. Voluntary effort needs to be well managed to sustain people's enthusiasm over time, including taking into account what can realistically be managed in terms of time and capability. The Council can provide support with practical advice and resources and a collaborative way of working. In cemeteries, communication is key to ensuring volunteers follow best practice in gravesite maintenance and understand that prior permission is required (see 3.3.2.4). Volunteer groups can also benefit through sharing skills and experience. For example, the Friends of Bolton Street Cemetery have gained considerable experience in heritage conservation which would be invaluable to volunteers in other cemeteries.

Also important is the need to optimise positive outcomes in terms of the Council's overall management objectives and related budgets. Greater recognition of the heritage in cemeteries

comes with a corresponding desire to conserve it and that comes at a cost. Community partnerships and appropriate sponsorships can potentially help to stretch the Council's budget allocations further through volunteer effort and fundraising.

## 3.6 Resilience

### 3.6.1 Objectives

1. To contribute to the city's resilience through emergency preparedness of cemetery services.
2. To contribute to the city's resilience and climate change response through ecosystem services on cemeteries land, where appropriate and within the scope of the cemeteries' vision.

### 3.6.2 Policies

#### 3.6.2.1 Emergency preparedness

1. Maintain operational plans to ensure the provision of cemetery services in the event of emergencies involving high numbers of deaths and/or high public health risks.
2. Co-ordinate emergency planning and operations with the New Zealand Police, Ministry of Health, Regional Public Health, hospitals and other local authorities in the region and with the funeral/memorial sector.
3. Plan emergency operations to avoid potentially damaging use of significant heritage and natural environment areas in the cemeteries if possible.

#### Explanation

Events such as natural disasters, pandemics or civil emergencies such as bombings or plane crashes can result in heavy demand on cemetery services at short notice. Large numbers of deaths can represent a public health hazard, particularly when a pandemic is involved, which may need specialist advice from the health sector and close attention to protecting the health and safety of cemetery staff. The Council maintains a business continuity plan to ensure

that cemetery services can continue with minimal disruption in various emergency scenarios. The pandemic response plan was recently updated and implemented during the Covid-19 outbreak this year and includes ensuring provision for emergency storage facilities and mass burials if the need arises.

#### 3.6.2.2 Resilient communities

1. Promote the health and wellbeing benefits of cemeteries as a place with opportunities for physical activity, relaxation, connection with history and place, contact with nature, and community involvement.
2. Help build communities by encouraging citizens to protect and care for cemetery heritage together.

#### Explanation

During the community engagement for this plan people commented that it is important for cities to have quiet places of contemplation, places of special meaning and green spaces - for people's health and wellbeing. As the city grows and the density of urban development intensifies, demand for these values will increase. People sought out Karori Cemetery during the Covid-19 lockdown as a place to walk and relax.

#### 3.6.2.3 Fire

1. Manage fire risk by:
  - i. Appropriate management of activities that are a potential fire risk
  - ii. Co-ordinating with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)
  - iii. Working with neighbours to co-ordinate cross-boundary fire mitigation and planting fire-resistant species in areas of high fire risk.

#### Explanation

Fire has the potential to threaten safety, assets, neighbouring properties and set back ecosystem restoration. Open fires and fireworks are prohibited in the cemeteries (see 5.3.3, Rules).

### 3.6.2.4 Sustainability and ecosystem services

1. Manage the cemeteries in a sustainable manner to reduce the environmental impact of cemetery operational activities and public use.
2. Manage the cemeteries' natural areas so that ecosystem services help sustain a healthy and robust environment.
3. Apply best practice sustainable design, such as water-sensitive and energy-efficient design, in planning and implementing future development of existing and newly acquired land.
4. Encourage the use of coffin handles that can be recycled or safely burned and return plastic coffin handles to funeral directors.

#### Actions

- a) Review and develop a sustainable system for managing green waste and surplus soil in the cemeteries.
- b) Undertake a sustainability audit of the cemetery operations to inform future management.
- c) Investigate the potential for carbon zero cemetery operations.

#### Explanation

Cemetery operations involve activities that consume energy and resources and potentially pollute the environment. The activities include those carried out directly by the Council such as cremation and mowing large areas, and activities by others such as the embalming and purchase of products like coffins and non-biodegradable decorations on graves. The Council manages these impacts in a number of ways. For instance, the cremator, which was replaced in 2016, has an automated energy efficiency system and operates under a resource consent that meets air discharge standards, and the toilets at Mākara Cemetery are solar-powered. However, the need to mow large areas in the lawn cemeteries has an ongoing impact. During cremations it is necessary to remove the plastic handles, which release pollutants if burned and these handles are effectively waste if

not re-used. Metal handles, on the other hand, can be recycled. Non-biodegradable grave decorations can create rubbish when they blow away or deteriorate. Plastic flowers, in particular, have been found blown into nearby streams. Composting floral tributes was suggested during community engagement but is not feasible due to the wires, ribbons and wrappings that are often included. QR codes attached to headstones and plaques are becoming popular as another option for virtual tributes and cemetery interpretation. The potential of this technology for reducing on-site decorations and signage is not yet known, nor its longevity, so should be monitored.

Some of these impacts relate to the choices that cemetery customers make and managing the impacts needs to be balanced with the principle of respecting people's customs and choices about death. For example, cremation will be the preferred choice for some people for religious reasons while others will choose a natural burial. The Council works from the principle of supporting people's choice where possible (see 3.2.1) and will encourage sustainable practices where possible - for example, by encouraging the use of biodegradable decorations as a way of moving away from plastics (see 3.2.2.3, action (a).) By returning plastic coffin handles to funeral directors, the Council can encourage their re-use or the alternative use of wooden handles that can be safely burnt.

Green waste is disposed of on-site at the cemeteries and can be a source of weeds if not well managed. Surplus soil, generated from grave digging, must be stockpiled until needed for grounds maintenance and can potentially be a source of sediment in runoff. Factors to consider in sustainably managing both green waste and surplus soil include suitable locations separated from watercourses and natural areas, good containment of material and, in the case of green waste, effective composting.

On the other side of the sustainability equation are the ecosystem services that the natural areas within the cemeteries provide. Vegetation cover, in particular, contributes to clean air, water quality, soil conservation and flood control (by filtering and