

Archdeacons' Briefing No 3 April 2009

Closed Churchyards in Northumberland

This is a briefing for clergy and churchwardens in Northumberland who are responsible for churchyards that are closed by 'order in council' and where the local authority has formally taken over maintenance.

With the creation of Northumberland County Council on 1st April 2009 there are new management arrangements for closed churchyards.

Churchwardens and clergy are welcome to contact the management team of Neighbourhood Services to request advice. This might be to clarify division of responsibilities between PCC and local authority, or it might be on some other practical matter such as trees, safety of memorials or churchyard walls/fences.

The preferred means of contact is through telephoning the Customer Relations Management hotline on **0845 600 6400** where a message can be left for the relevant manager. Using this telephone line means that response times will be monitored. Alternatively, email can be used.

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There are some churchyards where formal closure has been obtained but maintenance has *not* been taken over by the local authority. In this situation it is perfectly possible for a legal order to be made to the local authority but advice should be taken from one of the Archdeacons regarding the procedures for this.

There are some open churchyards where the local authority has a maintenance contract either with the PCC or with the Parish Council for grounds maintenance. Advice can also be sought from the management team in these cases.

The Neighbourhood Services Management team can be contacted for advice on managing environmental issues even if the churchyard is open.

The Northumberland County Council website has a page on 'death, Funeral and Cremations' with a number of useful links. Shortly there will be a link to 'Churchyards'. Please view at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=338>

A reminder that churchwardens and clergy still need to contact their Archdeacon, in the usual way, to clarify permissions required to do work in a churchyard whether it is open or closed! The Archdeacons will be able to clarify the correct processes to use. The Chancellor's Regulations for Memorials and the Care of Churchyards may be found on the diocesan website at <http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/people-and-places/churchwardens-page.aspx>

Peter Robinson and Geoff Miller, 21st April 2009