Introduction

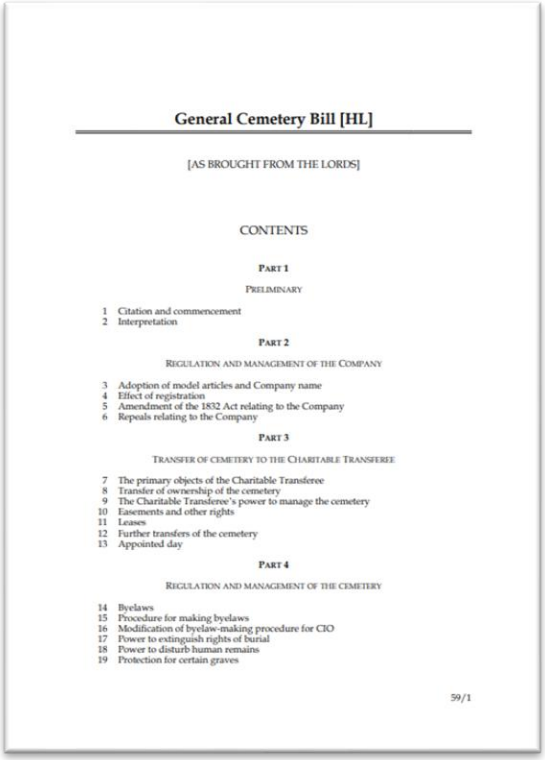
This is the latest in a series of newsletters from the Directors of the General Cemetery Company (GCC) intended for all those with an interest in Kensal Green Cemetery.

A sustainable future: Progress with the private Bill

Since our last newsletter in May 2025, we are pleased to report that our private Bill has passed a major milestone. Just before parliament broke for its summer recess in July, the Bill that we need to enable the transfer of the cemetery to a charity, cleared the House of Lords and moved across the lobby to the House of Commons.

Image showing the Chair of the Board of Directors and the Cemetery Manager at the Palace of Westminster after the Lords Committee Meeting.

One of the final stages in the scrutiny process in the House of Lords was an Unopposed Bill Committee Hearing which took place on Tuesday 17th June 2025 at the Houses of Parliament. Significant dialogue had already taken place prior to the meeting with the Ministry of Justice, Historic England, the Attorney General's Office, and the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery, who all submitted comments and queries on the draft Bill. All of this hard work and engagement prior to the meeting meant that the committee hearing went smoothly. Lord Gardiner as Chair and his colleagues asked a range of questions and clarifications on the day which the Chairman of the Board of the GCC, Cemetery Manager and advisors were able to respond to at the meeting. The session concluded positively with Lord Gardiner confirming that he was content for the Bill to proceed to the next stage.



General Cemetery Bill [HL]

[AS BROUGHT FROM THE LORDS]

CONTENTS

PART 1

PRELIMINARY

1 Citation and commencement
2 Interpretation

PART 2

REGULATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPANY

3 Adoption of model articles and Company name
4 Effect of registration
5 Amendment of the 1832 Act relating to the Company
6 Repeals relating to the Company

PART 3

TRANSFER OF CEMETERY TO THE CHARITABLE TRANSFEREE

7 The primary objects of the Charitable Transferee
8 Transfer of ownership of the cemetery
9 The Charitable Transferee's power to manage the cemetery
10 Easements and other rights
11 Leases
12 Further transfers of the cemetery
13 Appointed day

PART 4

REGULATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CEMETERY

14 Byelaws
15 Procedure for making byelaws
16 Modification of byelaw-making procedure for CIO
17 Power to extinguish rights of burial
18 Power to disturb human remains
19 Protection for certain graves

59/1

Image showing a page from the draft Bill.

Since that time the Bill was received by the Commons on 10th July 2025 and had its first reading on the same day. The Bill is due to have its second hearing in September 2025 and we remain positive that the process may be completed by late 2025 or early 2026.

New faces

For those who have been following our progress through this newsletter, you will have gathered that the process of securing the new Act of Parliament that is required to overcome the issues associated with the GCC's historic governance, is complex, expensive and very time-consuming. However, as noted in the previous newsletter, whilst the parliamentary process is taking place the GCC is taking the opportunity to prepare for the future and starting to put in place the arrangements it will need when the Bill (hopefully) becomes an Act and it is able to transfer the site and operation into the ownership of a new charity.

One of the first things needed is a steering group that will ultimately become the board of trustees of the new charity. To get it established, and for continuity to help ensure as smooth a transition as possible, initially this will consist of a number of GCC directors, as well as three others from elsewhere recruited through an open process.

Our last newsletter included a public call for applications from the community and we ran an advertising campaign in national newspapers and on various recruitment websites. We are glad to report that we have received a good level of interest and are currently part-way through the selection process. We hope to introduce you to new steering group members in due course.

We are always interested to receive applications from people who understand and can embrace our vision and who can bring a spirit of optimism and positive energy. If you think you could play a role in the future of the cemetery please email a CV and cover letter to: office@inghampinnock.com

Until the charity is established and the site and company has been transferred into its ownership, the cemetery will continue to be run by the existing Board of Directors and, ultimately, the GCC's shareholders. The transfer of such a complicated operation to a new organisation must proceed in a gradual and orderly way to minimize any impact on our community and any risks to the business that provides the foundation for the future.

Emerging vision

Alongside seeking trustees, we have been developing our strategy for the future of the cemetery. Whilst the site will continue to operate primarily as a cemetery and crematorium, our role will expand as we are committed to doing more to conserve our buildings and engage people in the heritage of the site. To this end we have a series of draft charitable objects that we have set out in previous newsletters and shown again below that start to highlight this expanded role:

1. The continued operation of the cemetery as a public burial ground for the commemoration, burial and cremation of the dead;
2. The repair and conservation of the monuments, buildings and historical landscape features of the cemetery;
3. The conservation and management of historic records and other archives relating to the cemetery;
4. The education of the public about the social, economic, environmental, architectural and cultural history of the cemetery and those buried in it.

These objects will form a core part of the new charity's constitution and will shape what it can and cannot do.

Building on these draft objects we have developed a vision and a set of objectives that form the basis of the business plan for the new charity:

Our vision for the new charity is:

To care for Kensal Green Cemetery as a place of burial, cremation and quiet contemplation for current and future generations of our diverse community. To do this we will carefully and sensitively conserve and repair our buildings and monuments, promote education about them and improve the

condition of infrastructure & landscape for the public benefit whilst operating an active cemetery and crematorium.

Our objectives are:

1. To maintain an open and active cemetery and provide for existing and future generations of friends and families of the deceased
2. To conserve and enhance the heritage of Kensal Green Cemetery
3. To continue to operate a high quality, financially viable cemetery and crematorium whilst diversifying income streams from other assets and activities
4. To engage and educate people about the social, economic, architectural, environmental and cultural history of the cemetery and those buried in it
5. To balance the conservation and enhancement of the historic landscape features with nature conservation to provide a green space for commemoration and the quiet enjoyment and contemplation of the community.

Business planning will continue alongside the promotion of the private Bill and we are keen for the new steering group members to be involved in this as they join so that they can help shape the future of the cemetery and have a sense of ownership of the strategy that they will have a role in overseeing. After 200 years of operation at the cemetery, we want to take the time and care to get the strategy for the future right.

All change but no change

The Directors and the team at the GCC want to take the opportunity to reassure everyone that despite all the work on the new charity and the private Bill, we do not expect there to be any disruption to the operation of the cemetery and crematorium for our surrounding communities and the friends and families of the deceased. Whilst the legal status of the site may change and we will hopefully be better equipped to look after our buildings and landscape, Kensal Green Cemetery and the West London Crematorium will remain first and foremost a place of burial and cremation for our community and this remains our number one priority.

Contact

If you would like to receive future newsletters or opt out of future newsletters, please e-mail the GCC office using the following address: peter.humphries@kensalgreencemetery.com