

IN PARLIAMENT

SESSION 2024-25

GENERAL CEMETERY BILL [HL]

SUMMARY OF PRE-DEPOSIT CONSULTATION

- 1 Prior to depositing the Bill, the GCC consulted with GCC shareholders; the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery; ward members and officers of their local authorities: the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, as well as the neighbouring London Borough of Brent and Westminster City Council; local parish churches and the diocese of London; local residents' associations and amenity societies; local MPs; Historic England; the National Lottery Heritage Fund; and officials at relevant Government departments, particularly the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Office. As part of this process, a consultation leaflet, *Kensal Green Cemetery: Towards a Sustainable Future*, was published on 10 June 2024 explaining the proposals. Responses were invited by 31 July.
- 2 The following consultation responses were received.
- 3 Detailed drafting queries were made by House Officials, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Office. These resulted in a number of changes to the drafting of the Bill.
- 4 GCC shareholders were broadly supportive of the proposals. They subsequently voted unanimously in favour of the Bill's promotion at a special meeting on 7 February.
- 5 The local authorities were supportive and made some further drafting suggestions in relation to their own functions.
- 6 Historic England expressed support for the Bill in general terms and sought clarification of a number of points. In particular, they want to see a conservation management plan put in place for the cemetery and consultation in relation to grave renewal proposals. The GCC is content with these and is now working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Historic England.
- 7 The Bishop of London was content provided that the Bill does not affect their jurisdiction over consecrated land.
- 8 One of the constituency MPs has expressed support for the Bill, and no negative comments have been received from the other MP.
- 9 The Queens Park Community Council expressed general support but was concerned that there should be local representation on the future charitable body. They also sought confirmation of what steps would be taken to contact grave owners and other interested parties before the grave renewal powers were exercised, and what would happen to memorials. The GCC

confirmed their intention to follow the same notice and objection processes as other recent cemetery bills, and that they would maintain a database of interested stakeholders to consult on future proposals.

- 10 Kensal Triangle Residents Association expressed general support for the principle of a transfer to a charitable body but were concerned about the GCC's role in any future structure, and concerned that there should be extensive research carried out before the grave renewal powers were exercised.
- 11 The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery were broadly supportive of the proposal to transfer the cemetery to a charitable body, but expressed concerns about when the transfer would occur. They subsequently petitioned on this point, and the GCC agreed an undertaking that the grave renewal powers would not be exercised until the transfer had occurred and a conservation management plan had been produced. The Friends subsequently withdrew their petition.
- 12 20 local residents and individuals with rights of burial or family members buried in the cemetery made specific comments on the proposals:
 - seven expressed support in principle for the transfer to a charity (there were no objections to this in principle),
 - two were broadly supportive of grave renewal,
 - two expressed objection in principle to, or concerns about, the proposal for the re-use of graves where rights had been granted in perpetuity,
 - eight queried the impact on specific graves,
 - five asked for confirmation of the steps that would be taken to consult with grave owners and relatives before exercise of the grave renewal powers,
 - four raised queries about the treatment of memorials,
 - nine expressed concern about particular heritage features in the cemetery,
 - two suggested that the cemetery should be the responsibility of a national body,
 - three expressed concern about neighbouring developments,
 - one urged more engagement with local authorities.
- 13 In addition, although the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were unfortunately not formally consulted, they have stated that they have no concerns with the Bill.

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