

# Cemetery Improvement Plan V6 14/02/25



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## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline a 5 year plan for the upkeep, improvement and general maintenance of the Cemetery.

## Background information

Whilst the cemetery remains largely presentable, it is a living environment, with growing trees, bushes and ongoing grave works. It therefore requires ongoing maintenance in order not to become overgrown, dilapidated and unsightly.

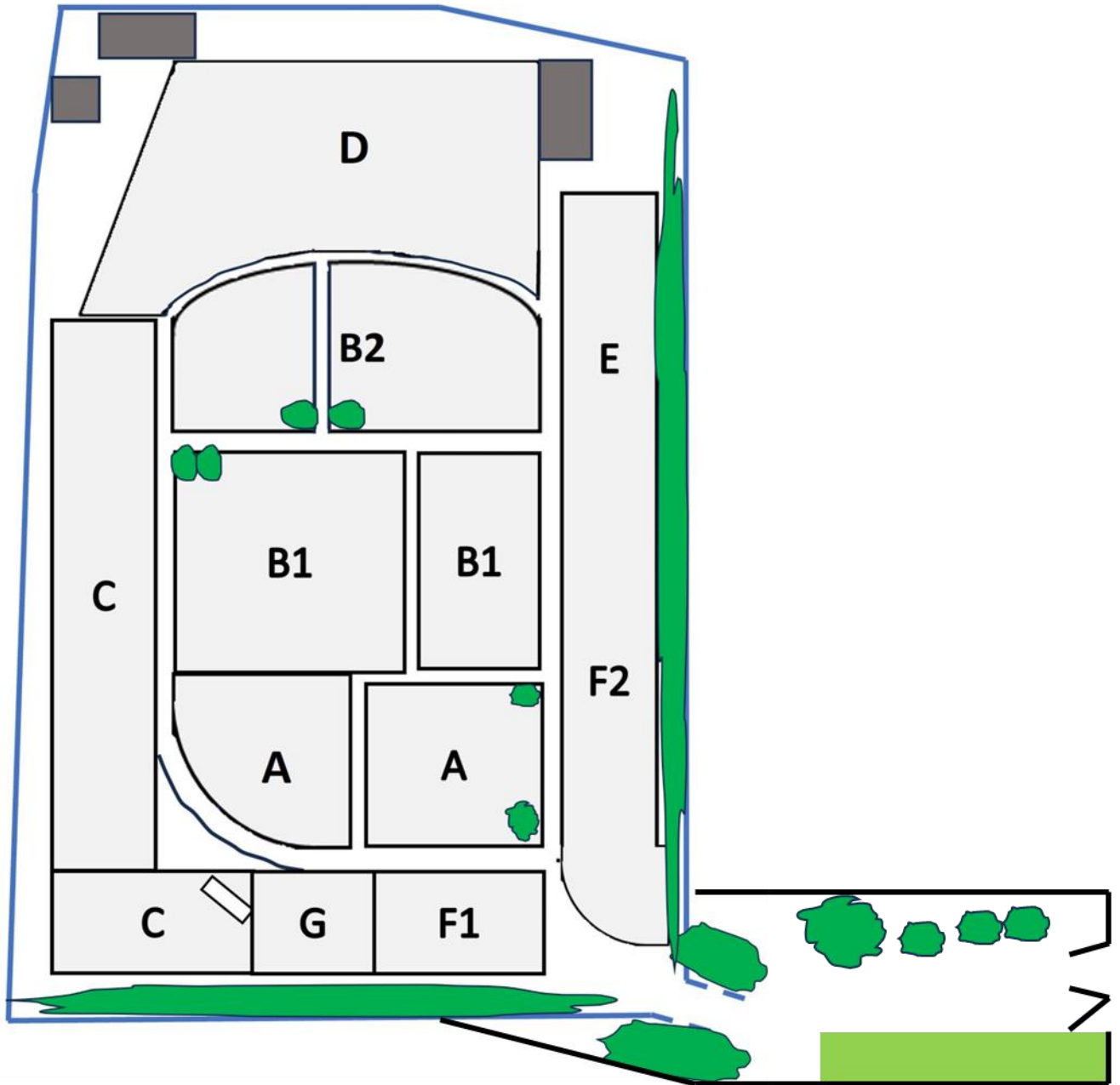
There are areas of the cemetery, which require improvement beyond day to day maintenance and all of this requires resources and funding.

The aim is to develop a cemetery, that the Council and its parishioners can justifiably be proud of, whilst serving the needs of those who choose to be buried in our cemetery, their friends and family.

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## Cemetery Map

The map below is used to identify those areas of the Cemetery where improvements need to take place.



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## Summary of Key Activities

The list below is an initial (non-exhaustive) list of items identified for improvement.

- *Obtain a skip and perform a general tidy up. (Complete)*
- *Clear all shrubs, bushes and level area next to F2 & E. (Completed)*
- *Plant new hedge along southern border F2 & E (Completed)*
- *Re profile bank alongside school boundary area next to C & D.*
- *Remove dead trees and cut back throughout cemetery.*
- *Remove all large Irish Yew trees in cemetery. (First yew removed)*
- *Plant new Rowan to replace cut down Irish Yew (Completed)*
- *Completion of composting area. (Completed)*
- *Add bulbs and flowering trees to new grass area along drive. (Complete 3 x cherry trees only)*
- *Add new cemetery sign at entrance with photo, contact details etc.*
- *Revamp cemetery noticeboard (Completed)*
- *Create storage area next to garage.*
- *Replace damaged driveway fencing. (Completed)*

## Detailed Activities

### Obtain a skip and perform a general tidy up.

*There are several areas of the cemetery, which require a general tidy up and removal of rubbish, concrete, gravel and other clutter, which has grown over the years.*

*The intention here would be to use the "pay back" team to carry out the tidy up.*

**Completed April 2024**

### Clear all shrubs, bushes and level area next to F2 & E.

*The area along the southern boundary next to burial plots F2 & E, has been cut back before, but continues to look unsightly, unlevel and contains some rubbish and old bushes.*

*The proposal, if access can be provided, is to have a digger remove all the shrubs and bushes, level the ground and plant new trees and shrubs to create a nature friendly and visually attractive southern border.*

*Clearance of southern boarder completed by "Payback" team **July 2024.***

*Removal of stumps and landscaping of boarder **Completed Aug 2024.***

*New Beech hedge (80M) **Completed Dec 24.***

### Re-profile bank alongside school boundary area next to C & D.

The northern boundary with the school, is a steep bank which has had deposits of soil dumped at various locations at the foot of the bank over the years.

The intention will be to move the piles of soil and use these to reprofile the bank and to clean up it's appearance.

Some of the trees have died and have already been cut down. Others are in a poor state, one dead tree has already fallen and needs to be removed, others will be checked by a tree surgeon and may need to be cut down. The remaining trees should be trimmed back if required to remove dead wood and encourage new growth.

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If any large gaps are then left, we will consider planting new trees.

This area between the bank and the path (part of area C & D) would then be tidied up, spring bulbs and flowers added and used as an area where ashes can be scattered.

## Bank beside C and F1

Narrow border to the left (west) of the cemetery. Plan to be devised.

## Remove dead trees and cut back throughout cemetery.

Additionally, to the specific task specified above, a general tidy up of trees in the cemetery should be carried out.

This would include removing dead branches, lifting lower branches that hang over the paths, and trimming of large trees where appropriate.

## Remove all large fir trees in cemetery.

There are six or seven large Irish Yew trees in the cemetery, which are non-native species. These have grown so large, there are now several grave plots, which we can never use.

Some are starting to encroach on existing burial plots.

The intention would be to remove all the fir trees, and over time, once roots have rotted and the ground settled, plant smaller native species that will add to the beauty & atmosphere of the cemetery.

*First yew removed as trial. Cut down by "Payback" team to large stump. Stump removed by tree surgeon. **Completed July 2024.***

*A new Rowan (Mountain Ash) tree has been planted to replace the cut down Irish Yew. **Completed Feb 2025.***

Plan now to be agreed for remaining yew trees.

## Completion of composting area.

*Concrete slabs have been laid in the cemetery by the payback team, to house a composting area and an area for the storage of topsoil. This work needs completing, by adding storage bins. The intention is to create the bins using wooden sleepers, for which a cost is required. Payback may be able to complete this work for us.*

*There will be 3 bins for the composting and one for the topsoil.*

*Quotes for timber sleepers obtained July 2024. **Composting Bin Completed. Top-soil bin***

***Completed Sep 2024***

## Drive add bulbs and flowering trees to new grass area along drive.

*The area along the west side of the drive, has been cleared and grassed. We will plant bulbs and 3 ornamental flowering trees along this border, in order to create a pleasant introduction to the cemetery, which would be particularly beautiful in spring.*

*Three flowering cherry trees have been sourced and planted. Additional bulbs may be added in the autumn. **Completed March 2024***

The area at the top of the drive, next to the toilet, should be cleared, tarmac laid and turned into a formal parking area.

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## Add new cemetery sign at entrance with photo, contact details etc.

There is currently no sign advertising the cemetery. A new sign should be commissioned, advertising the cemetery, containing a photograph of the cemetery, along with contact details for anyone wishing to make enquiries.

## Revamp cemetery noticeboard.

*The noticeboard at the top of the drive in the cemetery, will be updated with current, relevant information, the content of which has yet to be decided. **Completed Feb 2025.***

## Create storage area next to garage.

There is always a need from time to time to store materials or the need to have a work area for example when repairing benches.

We will create a paved work/storage area next to the garage, screened off by fencing and a gate from the cemetery.

## Replace damaged driveway fencing.

*The fencing along the Western side of the entrance drive was damaged by overgrown laurel trees and ivy (now removed). The fencing needs replacing. It is proposed to replace the fence with a 1.8m chain link fence and metal posts, similar to the original, but without the barbed wire overhang. **Completed March 2024.***

## Ongoing management

Once the one-off improvement to the area next to F2 & E and the bank alongside school boundary have been completed suitable ongoing maintenance operations need to be incorporated into the ground's maintenance schedule. A schedule of other annual/ seasonal work suitable for the Community Payback team can be drawn up.

## Summary

Anyone who has spent time in the cemetery, particularly on a sunny day, listening to the bird song, the children and the squirrels playing and taking in the serenity of the environment, cannot help but to wonder at the peace and tranquillity.

However, the cemetery is a live environment, which is constantly changing throughout the seasons and the years. It requires a level of maintenance & management commensurate with its importance to, and its role in, the community and equal to the tasks that must be undertaken. This does not come without a cost. Without the correct level of activity & funding, the cemetery will become an unattractive and under used asset.

We are therefore asking for Sturry Parish Council to make a commitment to provide the funds and resources to enable us to offer the best cemetery we can to the community.

The above should be seen as a start, not an end and an ongoing commitment.

This draft plan will need to be kept current and updated at regular intervals.

**This plan was approved by the Sturry Parish Council on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

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## Annexe A

### Nesting

***There is no law in the UK preventing any one from felling trees or pruning hedges at any time of year.***

All birds in the UK are fully protected by law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - WCA) from intentional harm. Under the same act, any active nest, including nest building or a nest with eggs or chicks in, is also protected from intentional destruction or removal and you cannot block access to any active nest. So, if you see a bird carrying nesting material or food into an area, this indicates that there is an active nest there.

It is safer do any tree work over the winter months when you can see into the tree and the tree itself is dormant. This also avoids the peak season for nesting birds, which is from the beginning of March to the end of August.

However, some birds can nest at any time of year, and the work must be completed at some point.

Recent winters have shown that milder weather can tempt many birds into nesting early. There have been reports of Blackbirds with chicks in January, Robins with chicks in February and Ducks with ducklings in March. ***It does not matter when or where the bird's nest is, it is still protected by the WCA all year round.***

A frequent question is asked about felling conifers; they are normally very big, out of control, difficult to see into to check for nests. Cutting the lower branches off a conifer will allow us to look up into the tree for nests. Old nests and roosting sites are not protected by the WCA. Regardless of the time of year, if we find an active nest, we will leave the tree or hedge until the fledglings have left the nest, then carry out the work.

Sturry Parish Council understands the importance and sensitivity of removing any bushes or trees during the nesting season.

It's all about common sense and timing. Sturry Parish Council and its contractors will do all we can to ensure nests and nesting birds are not disturbed.

Long term, we will be creating an attractive native environment, which we hope will encourage birds and wildlife to make their homes in the Cemetery.

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## Annexe B

### Provisional Timetable V4 Aug 2024

The attached timetable is draft and will change. Items may require more detailed designs, quotes, and approvals. This as we know can impact the timeframe significantly.

The plan does however offer a realistic view of the breadth, quantity and relationships of the various activities required to implement the plan.

As with the overall plan, this timetable of activities, will need to be kept current and updated at regular intervals.

