

Dear Arran Elderslie Councillors,

We were hoping for a development towards a Natural Burial option in Paisley or vicinity and so far delayed filling out the questionnaire for funeral arrangements on our to do list.

Upon reading the staff report regarding Arran- Elderslie cemeteries again, we note that staff discouraged the establishment of a NBG with three arguments:

- 1) The maintenance costs would be too high;
- 2) It would be unfair not to offer winter burial to all, including those who reserved plots in the existing cemetery.
- 3) There are no standards for NB sites.

As to the cost of the existing cemeteries, staff points out that the interest from the reserve fund never fully covers the maintenance, even though 40% of the plot fee goes to the BAO for this purpose and even though summer students are deployed wherever possible to work the grounds. Surely there is room for imagining a landscape that honors the deceased as well as demanding less constant attention.

Regarding the second reservation, I agree that winterburials require manouvring with machinery across existing graves and extensive removal of snow. They do disturb the vegetation and grounds of the cemetery.

As I explained in my presentation, the organisation of a NBG allows for one line access to the next grave site as well as the preparation of the shallower graves ahead of winter, making winterburials relatively easy. However we do sympathize with the third reservation of staff, namely that there are no standards for NB sites and it is unclear what is entailed in their establishment.

Would council be prepared to revisit this issue? We propose that ten of the 54 citizens, who expressed an interest form a working group in 2025 to describe the details to allow for the planning of a Natural Burial Site at one of the acreages adjacent to Paisley's cemetery on Bruce Road 11.

- Outline a shared vision of the NBG with clear parameters. These would help the municipality in visualizing the site and support the drafting of bylaws.
- With advice from local farmers and experts such as “Lands and Forests” Elmwood, the group would describe how to develop the envisaged landscape over time. The committee would draw up a 5 year plan from site preparation to the required maintenance, given the parcel of land most likely to be used and come up with cost estimates.
- The group would research and source planting materials, recommend procedures and also link to related not for profit organizations.
- Any cost for the research would be born by this committee and it’s supporters.
- Lastly members of the committee would commit to buying plots should the cemetery become a reality (provided those were set at the same or lower price as the traditional plots available.)
- The committee would present before 2026 budget time.

As we mentioned before, Arran Elderslie has a rare opportunity with land already owned adjacent to a cemetery to set an example and provide a home for a much desired burial option, which is rare in Canada and especially in Ontario. It would satisfy those who yearn for nature’s first option of laying the body to rest in earth and dislike the necessity for embalming and storing or cremating when death occurs in winter. Establishing a Natural Burial Ground would also signify a cultural awareness that we need to protect biodiversity , that we need green spaces within settlements and that we urgently need to encourage lower material and energy use.