

Kilteely Dromkeen Cemetery Association

Reply to Questions from Councillor Michael Donegan.

1. Percolation testing of suitable site in Kilteely

- a. In 2015, we assess Site C it failed due to elevated water table levels
- b. In 2017, we assessed Site D it passed the initial assessment, but access would be by way of a recorded monument & permission would not be granted.
- c. A Preliminary Site Suitability Assessment was carried out on the 13th of 14th of March 2023 on Site A & B in Kilteely (See attached Drawing)
 - i. It is imperative to carry out a site assessment in winter period to determine true ground water levels especially for a graveyard.
 - ii. Site B was discounted due to elevated water table levels in all trial hole's opened.
 - iii. The lower section of Site A was discounted due to elevated water table levels observed in the trial holes.
 - iv. It is the view of our Environmental Section the upper portion of Site A would prove risky to develop as a graveyard. The defunct wells indicate that water historically broke out along a north south line at the base of the high ground. The lowest water table is between 2.20m & 1.95m below ground level and with the trial holes dug and the down ward pressure removed, it is highly likely that the water table would creep higher after a few days. For a new burial ground, it would not be appropriate and they do not believe that there is any merit in progressing the upper portion of Site A to a full site suitability investigation.

2. Ownership of the three cemeteries.

- a. St. Bridget's Graveyard in Kilteely is in the ownership of the Council
- b. The Millennium Cemetery is not in the ownership of the Council (Community Graveyard)
- c. Ballinlough Graveyard is in the ownership of the Council.

3. Ballinlough Grave Spaces available.

- a. Whilst visually there are areas within the graveyard that look unoccupied this does not indicate that this ground has had no previous burials contained within, it's just what markers, ground undulation has disappeared over time, the erection of headstones only became popular in the 19th Century. This graveyard is medieval and or even Early Christian and have had burial throughout over time, even if there is no surface trace.
- b. Allowing increased modern burial would have a negative impact, by disturbing older burials and inappropriate, unsympathetic materials & design for new memorials changing the entire ambience of the site.
- c. In addition, it is likely that most, if not all, of these graveyards would not pass modern percolation tests which are used to determine suitable ground for internments.
- d. In 2018 we wrote to the than parish priest, as we were advise he had been selling graves in this cemetery unbeknownst to us, we sought clarification for same & who he allocated grave to.

4. Heritage Grants (for Dromkeen old Church)

- a. The Representative Church Body (RCB) transferred ownership of the Graveyard & Church on 10/01/1946 to LCCC
- b. There are TWO churches in Dromkeen, the First Fruits Church of Ireland in the extended graveyard at the rear and the original medieval parish church near the roadside boundary.
- c. The East wall of First Fruits Church is of concern to us, it has been weakened by the installation of a heating system, vegetation is accruing on the structure and the wall tops should be secured before further deterioration occurs.
- d. This First Fruits Church is post 1700 and would not qualify for Community Monuments Fund so we would have to see if there was availability in the Historic Structure Grant Scheme in 2025.
- e. The original parish church near the roadside is in reasonable condition, although I noted in 2023 a bulge on the North wall on a 2023 visit. It would qualify for CMF but is not in the top priority list.

5. Columbarium Walls.

- a. In accordance with our Burial Ground Strategy 2021;
 - i. The BG Strategy indicated there was an 8.4% increase in those wishing to be cremated in the Cappamore / Kilmallock Operational Area.
 - ii. With the increase of cremations, we in accordance with our BG Strategy intend incorporating the provision of either Columbarium Walls / Cremation Plots within both our new & existing cemeteries where there is the demand & capacity.
- b. Currently there are no plans to install Columbarium Wall in either St. Bridget's / Ballinlough Graveyards as be appropriate in old graveyards
- c. If the Community in Killeely wish to install Columbarium Walls within the Community Cemetery subject to there being space we have no objection, there may be planning constraints.
- d. In 2021 on foot of representation from Cllr. B. Teefy we carried out a GPR survey of St. Bridget's to determine was the any unused areas within the graveyard that could potentially be used for new graves, the survey indicated the all areas assessed that visually looked unoccupied the ground had been disturbed which indicated former burials.
 - i. We have recently been advised by the community in Killeely a former Parish Priest took it upon himself to allocate visually unoccupied graves within this cemetery to members of the community, (something we were fully unaware of). We would however like to determine whom these persons are in order to avoid any unnecessary concerns raised by us.

6. Cost of Community Cemeteries.

- a. Limerick City & County Council provides a grant aid of €25,000 towards the development of community graveyards; this grant is contingent on certain criteria being met in particular.
 - i. Commitment by local community to acquire land & develop burial facilities
 - ii. Planning permission obtained for the proposed facility
 - iii. Construction works imminent or underway
 - iv. Local funding being raised toward the cost of the new facility
 - 1. The community could advance sell a portion of the graves to fund its development.
 - v. Technical approval to the proposed granted by the Council
 - vi. The Community will retain ownership of the cemetery forever more.

7. Insurance for Cemetery Associations.

- a. Our Public Liability Insurances through Irish Public Bodies (IPB)
 - i. Extends to indemnify local & voluntary community groups working in Council cemeteries relating to the clean-up of burial grounds i.e. grass cutting, pruning of hedges, sweeping of paths. It does not cover construction or physical repair works, tree felling or works undertaken by persons under the age of 16, it also does not cover the employment of third parties to carry out this work, they must have their own Insurances etc. & present copies of same to community groups in order to work within our cemeteries.

8. Dromkeen Burial of Ashes at the back wall.

- a. As above, until the appropriate restoration works can be carried out to the Frist Fruits Church for health & safety the addition of ashes plots or the construction of a Columbarium Wall is currently not an option.

9. Repair to Dromkeen Church and entrance gate.

- a. It is intended to carry out refurbishment works of both this & other entrance graveyard gates, within the current O&M budget for Burial Grounds.

10. Public lights at Dromkeen and Ballinlough.

- a. Due to the historic nature of both Graveyards, we would not be in a position to installing pubic lighting in either. The Council do not in principal provide internal lighting within any of our burial grounds.
- b. The Transportation section within the Council may be able to assist with the instillation of street lighting on the Public Roads adjacent to Cemeteries / graveyards
- c. Trevor McKechnie may be able to assist with external public lighting

11. Resurface of front area of Dromkeen Cemetery.

- a. Trevor McKechnie, may be able to assist with resurfacing of external road.