



Mrs Sinead Burrows,
The Town Clerk
The Guildhall,
Lower Fore Street,
Saltash,
PL12 6JX

By email only

25th January 2024

Subject to contract

Dear Sinead

Proposal for shared use of the Churchtown Cemetery car park in connection with a proposed natural burial ground at Churchtown Farm

The proposal below follows an 'in principle' proposal in August 2023 for shared use of facilities. This is attached for information as an appendix. I also presented the proposal to the burial sub-committee on 25th September. The Town Council have requested a more detailed proposal to outline how shared use of the car park would work.

It is stressed that any proposal at this stage is subject to planning, subject to contract and also subject to us developing a more detailed and costed plan for the operation of the site. We have a broad indication of this having taken advice, but our priority at this stage is to assess site feasibility and then to apply for planning permission. Nevertheless, we appreciate the Town Council's reasons for wanting a greater degree of clarity so as to assess whether 'in principle' agreement can be reached over the car park, subject to the above.

Our proposal is as follows, and we are willing to discuss any points further:

Area for use	The Churchtown Cemetery Car Park.
Proposed use	Use for parking for those attending burials at the proposed Churchtown natural burial ground, only for the duration of the burial.

It is anticipated (based on advice from the Association of Natural Burials) that there will be between 25 to 50 burials per year, although of course this can only be an estimate.

Type and duration of agreement We envisage that a licence for shared use will be the most appropriate form of agreement.

The duration of the licence will need to be for the expected lifetime of the natural burial ground, i.e. until it is full. This means a 40 year term will be needed.

Naturally, friends and relatives will also wish to visit graves periodically after burials and after the end of the 40 year term. This is likely to be in small numbers and some provision will need to be made for this.

Booking system A clear booking system is essential. It is proposed for this to work as follows:

1. Our natural burial manager is approached by someone to arrange a burial. Provisional dates and times are discussed but not settled.
2. Our manager immediately emails the relevant officer at Saltash Town Council with the provisional dates and times. STC reply to say which date(s) and time(s) are available for use of the car park or otherwise to offer alternatives. These are held for an agreed period, say 48 hours or whatever period is otherwise agreed, to allow time to consult with the family. A maximum of three times and dates would normally be sufficient, to avoid STC having to keep a larger number of slots on hold.
3. Our manager finalises a date with the family, informed by when the car park is available, and confirms a booking by email to STC, who reply to confirm and enter this into their booking system.
4. Any subsequent changes are also agreed in writing, by email.

People visiting graves individually after burials will need to be able to do so at any time and it is proposed that they should be able to use the car park informally, just as visitors to Churhtown Cemetery are able to do so.

Commercial terms It is proposed that a baseline annual licence fee is paid, plus an agreed amount per burial. This allows STC a baseline income and reflects the informal use of the car park by individual visitors to graves, but also allows a proportional share of income per burial.

As an indicative guide only, and subject to more detailed assessment post-planning when we carry out a fully costed plan, a baseline licence fee of say £500 per year plus say £50 per burial might be realistic. Assuming between 25 and 50 burials per year, this would produce income to STC of between £1,750 and £3,000 per year.

Whatever sums are agreed, they will be reviewed at regular intervals during the term of the licence (5 yearly is proposed).

Responsibilities STC will remain fully responsible for the repair and maintenance of the car park.

We will be responsible for ensuring it is left in a clean and tidy state after every burial.

Insurance We will indemnify STC against all losses and damages arising out of our use of the car park.

Legal costs We will pay STC's reasonable legal costs for the preparation of a licence agreement (which I suggest that we can draft initially).

Any agreement involves a discussion between two parties and we are willing to discuss these proposals further to enable an agreement that works for both parties.

I also hope that this will be seen as something which offers a service to the people of Saltash and the surrounding area as environmentally-friendly burial becomes more of an established and popular concept, and to some degree it will alleviate pressure on STC's own cemetery.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



William Trinick
BSc (Hons) MRICS
Estate Manager



APPENDIX
Proposal submitted august 2023

ANTONYESTATE

Proposed natural burial site at Churchtown Farm, Saltash and proposal for shared facilities

1. Summary

The following is provided for the consideration of the members of Saltash Town Council. The purpose is to explain the proposal for a natural burial ground and to seek an agreement with the Town Council, subject to contract and subject to planning permission, for a shared arrangement for parking and for a site for a hut.

2. What is natural burial

The concept of natural burial started in the 1990's and is increasingly popular, with over sites 270 in the UK currently. It is popular with people of all religions and none.

Natural burial means being buried in a natural environment in a manner that does not inhibit decomposition but allows the body to be naturally recycled. Bodies are buried at a shallow depth of 2 to 2½ feet in a biodegradable casket made of a material such as willow or cardboard. Graves are dug by hand to ensure minimum impact upon the environment.

A natural burial site creates habitat for wildlife or preserves existing habitats which are rich in flora and fauna. These habitats include woodland, species-rich meadows, orchards, and sustainably managed farmland.

There are no standing headstones but sites provide a variety of ways of remembrance, including smaller flat stones laid flush with the ground (so as not to inhibit mowing), memorial tree planting and planting of wildflower mixes. The location of all burial plots is accurately recorded by GPS.

Families may employ the services of a funeral director but there is no compulsion to do so. A warm, welcoming and organised manager is essential however, as is well controlled management, for instance the provision of approved trees and wildflower mixes and arrangements for their establishment and future management.

Further information is available from the Natural Death Centre with whom we have consulted closely. See <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk>

3. The proposed site

The proposed site is shown below and in more detail on the plan in the appendix.



The site is ideally situated:

- It is exceptionally beautiful, with views over the River Lynher which are already enjoyed by many, who may in the future wish for themselves or their loved ones to be buried here.
- It is adjacent to the existing cemetery.
- It is easily accessible for people in Saltash.
- It is within an area already managed for conservation and Cornwall Wildlife Trust (as the farm tenant) have said they would be in favour of the proposal because it complementary to the conservation management of the site.

We recognise that Churchtown Farm is a popular and much-loved place for local people to walk. The proposed site will take only part of one field which avoids the most used path which runs diagonally over the field.

There is no landscape impact because the only visible change will be a wildflower meadow and a hedge and fence (see landscape pan in the appendix).

4. How it will operate

The area totals 1.8 acres, with the area available for natural burial plots being approximately 1.4 acres. It allows eventually for about 1,000 natural burial plots of 3.0 x 1.7 metres.

Burial plots will be planted with a wildflower mix to be supplied by the manager of the site to ensure consistency, so that the whole site gradually becomes a wildflower area. It will continue to be maintained as such, and as the site gradually fills the mowing regime will encourage existing wildflowers in the soil to grow here.

A small stone memorial may also be laid on each plot. This will be flush with the ground (1" below turf level to avoid mower damage) rather than being upright. The stones, which will be locally sourced, will be provided as part of the service and this will ensure consistency and quality.

A low, circular Cornish hedge with pedestrian gaps on each side will provide an entrance. Otherwise the boundary with the remainder of the field will consist of a short section of planted hedgerow (which will help provide a sense of enclosure when first entering the site) and a stockproof fence, probably post and rail, for the remainder of the length. This will help maintain the open aspect of the burial ground.

A small number of wooden benches will be provided near the top boundary. The existing hedge/tree boundary will be supplemented with additional planting but otherwise the intention is retain the open nature of the site, the views from which are its main attraction.

Access to the site will for the most part be pedestrian, with the caskets being carried on a funeral bier from the hearse or possibly from the church for church funerals. Access to the field entrance will be needed for hearses, close family members and those with limited mobility.

The natural burial site will either be managed by Antony Estate directly or via a lease or joint venture agreement with a suitable operator.

5. Current position

We have:

- Progressed our plans as far as shown on the attached.
- Spoken to Cornwall Wildlife Trust who are positive about the proposal.

- Had a preliminary site investigation from an environmental consultant who has advised there are unlikely to be any groundwater issues. The next step will be an on-site investigation with trial holes.
- Taken initial advice from an ecologist, with an ecological appraisal to follow.
- We will be engaging with Friends of Churchtown Farm.

Our next step beyond this will be to apply for planning permission, but before doing so there are the following matters which we seek to discuss with Saltash Town Council.

6. What do we seek from Saltash Town Council?

- a. The one essential thing the site lacks is parking. We seek an agreement with the Town Council for a shared parking arrangement in the existing cemetery carpark.

It is anticipated that there is likely to be around one funeral per fortnight. This is based on advice from the Natural Death Association who are the main body of expertise and have a wealth of experienced. We would envisage the use of the car park being via a booking system to ensure there is no overlap in use. We propose that the Town Council is paid an agreed sum per use.

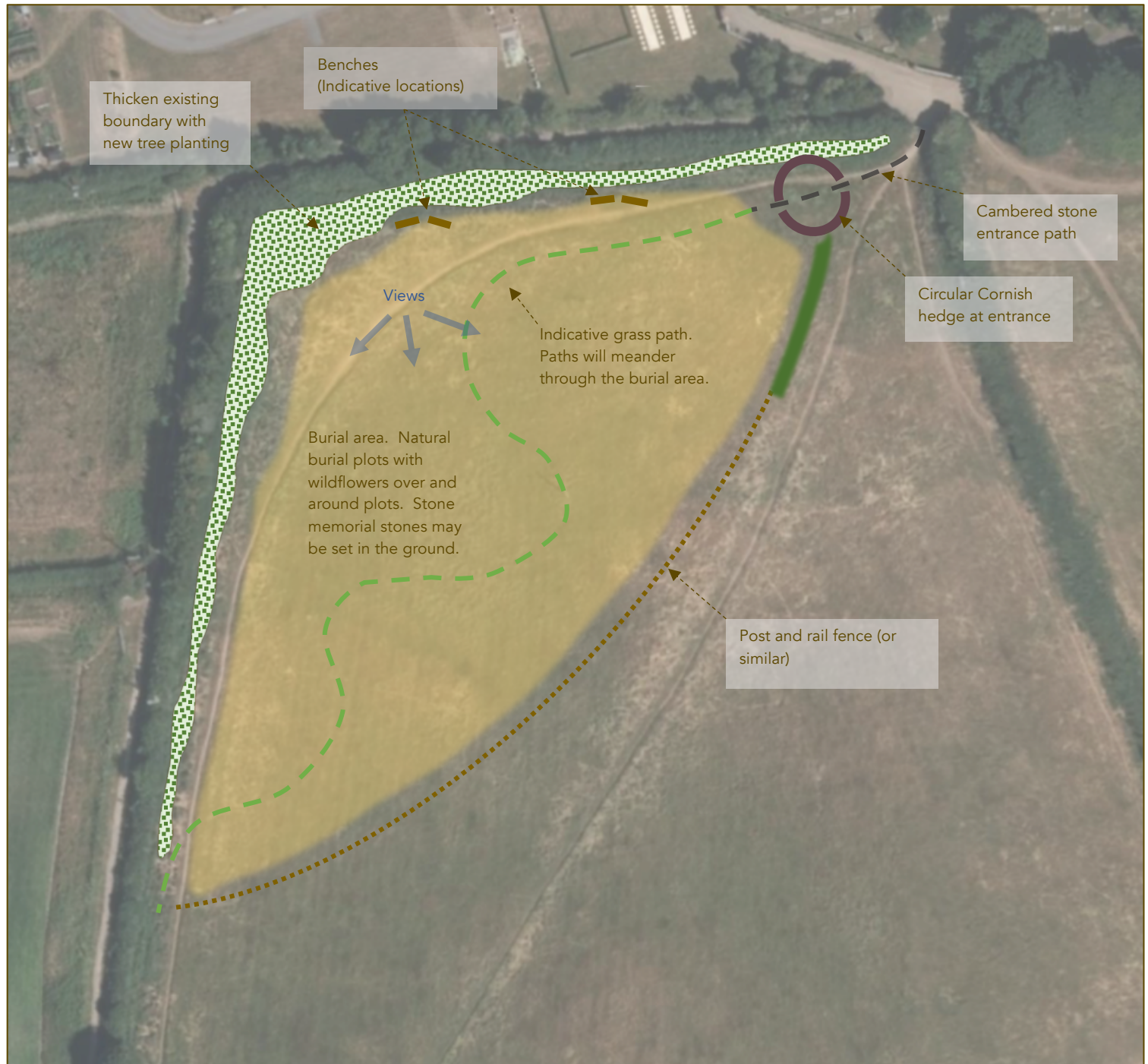
- b. We also seek a lease of a site for a small storage shed (approx. 500 sq ft) somewhere within the cemetery grounds where a funeral bier could be stored, together with small machinery and equipment. We understand that space is limited but we would like to explore this with you.

When we met with councillors and officers on site previously it was agreed that we would provide further details for a presentation once we had considered our plans further. We have now done so and remain willing to give a presentation and/or meet again. We would be grateful if you could give this your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

William Trinick
Estate Manager

August 2023

Churchtown Farm Natural Burial Ground Indicative design



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