



**REPORT TO: THE PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
26 JUNE 2023**

REPORT BY: PROPERTY MANAGER, IAN COUSINS

**FEASIBILITY STUDY INTO PROPOSAL FOR THE FOUNTAIN AREA INCLUDING
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GARDEN OF CONTEMPLATION**

1. Purpose

1.1 To inform members of the results of the feasibility study into options to develop the existing fountain area.

1.2 Present proposals for a new Garden of Contemplation and improved exit arrangements from the chapels. Construction of a new courtyard garden for the South Chapel, provision of new toilet facilities and improvements to the exit arrangements.

1.3 Update on the availability of budget and details of an alternative option.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the results of the feasibility study report be noted.

2.2 That an alternative scheme for the removal of the existing concrete fountain, provision of planting and potentially a memorial as a short-term solution should be added to the Capital Programme for 2023 / 2024.

2.3 That the results of the feasibility study should be reviewed, and a rationalised scheme be prepared.

2.4 An update report be provided during 2025 on the review of proposals, with revised costs and an update on the funding.

3. Background

3.1 The Crematorium has been developed over the years with various additions to the buildings and facilities. This has included the provision of waiting rooms, development of Garden of Contemplation and provision of a dedicated room for the Books of Remembrance.

3.2 Significant investment has continued more recently with the refurbishment of existing facilities such as the chapels and recently completed works to the waiting rooms.

4. Current

4.1 Whilst most areas of the crematorium facilities are well used and are valued by the community the fountain area is an underused area.

4.2 The fountain is constructed as a large centre piece to the cloister area. Its location with just two exits / entrance points makes for a cold and uninviting area. It fulfils no real purpose or enhancement to the facilities at the Crematorium.

4.3 The current operation of the fountain is unsatisfactory, with considerable maintenance issues and due to mechanical breakdown of the associated plant is currently non-operational.

4.4 The design itself is problematic with the large concrete surface generating a significant quantity of unsightly algae. Water treatment is undertaken to try to reduce and eliminate the problem, but the chemical used produces an unpleasant odour. The surface area also causes issues with high water consumption due to evaporation.

4.5 Whilst some enjoy the operation of the fountain most visitors use the area only as a quick route to access the gardens or the book room.

5. Proposal

5.1 This proposal looks to develop the fountain area for alternative uses that enhance the facilities provided at Portchester Crematorium.

5.2 Many return visitors don't want to impose on other families and their friends attending a funeral and our proposal is to look to provide a degree of separation from the two types of visits.

5.3 The proposal also looks to provide additional space for those visiting for acts of remembrance or to have their own memorial.

5.4 – New Garden of Contemplation – Image 1 – View north to south



The proposal is to form a new area to provide visitors with space to sit and take time to remember their family and friends in an area that provides different spaces and environments for individuals or groups.

The existing covered walkway will be opened up with direct access into the new area. This will provide a covered area for visits in inclement weather or those requiring shelter from the sunshine.

5.5 New Garden of Contemplation – Image 2 – View east to west



The paved area will be broken up with blocks of planting with varying heights of beds with various seating arrangements. A pergola will be provided to break up the area with the options for further planting.

Different paving materials will be used to divide the area and to give some zoning of the individual spaces.

The opportunity is available for inclusion of a memorial such as further tree memorials or frieze arrangement.

5.6 South Chapel Courtyard Garden



The first of the opportunities presented by these works is the creation of a new courtyard garden in place of the existing conservatory.

A large picture window will provide views of a natural environment with sympathetic planting of trees, shrubs etc. These would be designed to encourage wildlife into the space and therefore to provide some natural activity.

The area would be an enclosed space separated from the public access providing a peaceful relaxing view for those attending services.

The boundaries will be sympathetically finished to blend with the surroundings and designed to ensure those leaving the chapel don't disturb the next service.

5.7 – South Chapel New Exit Arrangements



The changes proposed also provide us with the opportunity to form a dedicated exit route from the South Chapel.

This would utilise some of the existing covered way with new construction to provide a covered exit route with its own dedicated flower bays

Natural light will be introduced to the area via roof lights and angled fins to the south side to allow restricted views of the South Chapel Courtyard Garden.

Various finishes will be utilised to break up the wall areas and encourage visitors to move away from the chapel towards the flower bays to reduce disruption to the following service.

5.8 - North Chapel New Exit Arrangements



These changes also provide us with the opportunity to form a dedicated exit route from the North Chapel.

This would utilise some of the existing covered walkway, with natural light introduced to the area via roof lights and angled fins to the west side to allow restricted views of the New Garden of Contemplation.

Various finishes would again be used to break up the wall areas.

5.9 – Toilet facilities and chapel exit arrangements



A view looking north from the main car park area showing the exit from the north chapel to the left, toilet facilities in the centre and the exit from the south chapel on the right of the above image.

A paved area would be provided that allow access from these facilities back to the car park and exit routes from the crematorium.

5.10 – New Entrance to Garden of Contemplation



Introduction of a new entrance way to the Garden of Contemplation directly from the main car park for those visiting the book room and gardens and avoiding the chapels and waiting room areas.

Customers are keen to see areas that enhance the Crematorium's facilities and allow more spaces for reflection and remembrance that don't directly link to the cremation process.

6. Finance

6.1 We have prepared some basic budget costing based on the feasibility study and images provided.

6.2 Early costings show the proposed scheme at between £1.5 and £3 million at today's construction costs. These figures include design work, approval, construction, and project management.

6.3 The location will require the works to be completed in a sensitive manner to avoid disrupting services and remembrance visitors. Works will need to be arranged to minimise the disruption caused by construction activity, noise, and vehicle movements and this is reflected in the cost.

6.4 With current commitments within the Capital Programme including the replacement of the Cremators at a value of up to £4.5million we have no capacity for further projects in the short term, but will endeavour to replenish the Capital Works Fund over the coming years at a rate that is acceptable to the Joint Committee when considering future budgets.

6.5 An alternative scheme is proposed that would see the removal of the existing concrete fountain and its replacement with planting with the potential to provide further memorials as a short-term solution. With an existing sum of £40k in the Capital Programme reassigned from feasibility to this scheme an additional sum of £35k will be required to be added to the 2023 / 2024 Capital Programme. This can be accommodated due to part of the works to install the cremators now falling into the 2024 / 2025 financial year.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The scheme detailed above would give a significant improvement to the facilities provided to all those attending services or for acts of remembrance.

7.2 Currently we have insufficient funds within the Capital Budget to deliver this scheme due to existing commitments including cremator replacement.

7.3 A review of the proposals and key features be carried out with a rationalised scheme being prepared.

7.4 In the interim the delivery of an alternative scheme to remove the fountain and replace with planting is proposed. This will significantly improve the appearance of the area in the short term.

7.5 An update report be provided during 2025 on the review of proposals, with revised costs and an update on the funding options.

Ian Cousins
Property Manager
June 2023

Background List of Documents –
Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972: Nil