06 April 2020

Dear parish clerk

Covid-19 outbreak – crematoria and burial grounds

We are aware that there are some parish councils and meetings within the district that have responsibility for burial grounds and wanted to clarify section 5(8) of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020, which states:

“A person who is responsible for a crematorium or burial ground must ensure that, during the emergency period, the crematorium is closed to members of the public, except for funerals or burials.”

The wording of the legislation refers only to the closure of crematoria, omitting reference to burial grounds. Guidance has therefore been sought from the Local Government Association. The outcome of that advice is that councils need to adopt a purposive interpretation to the legislation given the need to keep people apart. It was indicated that this is the approach that the Courts will use. Monitoring Officers are therefore being advised that the Regulations also cover the closure of cemeteries.

Please take action to comply with these Regulations and close any cemeteries (including closed burial grounds) for which you are responsible.

If you are aware of any churches within your parish that incorporate burial grounds for which they are responsible, please make sure that this message is shared with the appropriate parochial church council.

Yours faithfully

Jo Toomey
Head of Governance