

The council unlocked the cemetery gate on St Thomas Road for public use as this is an historic and established access point for the cemetery. The gate is opened and closed in accordance with the cemetery gate opening schedule. Earlham cemetery is public open space and access should be available to all residents of the city and to visitors as well.

The original decision to close this gate should have been the subject of proper consultation at the time, given that this is a listed cemetery. Unfortunately there is no record of any formal consultation having taken place and therefore it is correct that the gate should be opened in accordance with its position as an access point to the site. Should there be any reason to re-consider this position in future then a formal consultation process (including the council's conservation and design team and the Gardens Trust) would be instigated. This would be the case for any historic access point to a listed site.

It is accepted that there have been some issues in this locality previously. The majority of these issues concerned drivers and vehicle passengers depositing drug and sex paraphernalia at the end of the road, inside the cemetery near to this gate. The perpetrators of these acts gained access to the cemetery through one of the main entry points and not through this pedestrian access. These particular problems have reduced significantly over the last eight years.

There are occasional instances of rough-sleeping within the cemeteries - both Earlham and Rosary. These occur sporadically and the locking of gates has no impact on this. The cemeteries are public open space and have not been designed to keep people out, therefore access can always be achieved and a determined rough sleeper will find a way in.

In terms of any ASB that may have impacted directly on residents as a result of this gate being opened in the past, this was many years ago and it is highly likely that the perpetrators will have moved on by now. The council will, however, monitor any specific and verifiable complaints of ASB in this area as and when they are reported and officers will work with the police to resolve any such issues that may arise. The council will also consider the opening of this gate if there is any clear evidence that the access point itself is actually promoting ASB.

The provision of cemeteries is a discretionary service, that is to say there is no statutory responsibility for a local authority to provide a cemetery. Despite this, Norwich city council is proud to operate two historic cemeteries at Earlham and the Rosary. Together these sites cover almost 100 acres and include the responsibility for the maintenance of listed structures, the health and safety monitoring of around 40,000 memorials, the operation of a burial service for Norwich and a substantial grounds maintenance commitment.

Given that this is a discretionary service the council has, since 2014, been set on a path to achieve a break-even position – where the income received from cemetery services is equal to the cost of providing these services, including all of the maintenance of the sites. As part of this drive to break-even it is essential that the

cemeteries meet the changing needs and requirements of the local population - by developing new services and new ways of generating the revenue required to conserve and maintain them. To achieve this, the council must ensure that these wonderful open spaces are available for the living to enjoy.

Currently investigations are ongoing in order to determine the availability of burial space throughout both cemeteries and what opportunities and challenges these spaces can provide. This is intended to identify where and how the council can generate the necessary burial and funeral income to maintain the cemeteries for future generations.

Detailed environmental impact assessments will be carried-out wherever there are plans to provide for new burials. The impact of increased footfall will be assessed as will the options for future management and maintenance regimes. As always, there has to be a balance between a suitable environmental policy and the necessity to balance expenditure with income. By raising additional income the council is better able to protect and enhance the cemeteries.

The gate has been re-opened to allow people to walk into the cemetery as it was always intended that they should. However, my colleague Ben Webster design, conservation and landscape manager, has been considering whether it would also be useful to allow people to enter the cemetery on a bicycle so they could ride from east to west as a quiet alternative to Earlham Road. Ben has concluded that this could be a useful facility, though it would require a surfaced path to be created from the entrance gate to the path network in the cemetery. No design work has been undertaken on this so far, but if it became a live project the impact on pedestrians, flora, fauna and the historic conservation value of the cemetery would be assessed and minimised and ward members and the public would be invited to comment on any proposals.

With regard to the issue of dogs, the current rules and regulations are being updated and revised. As part of this process the role and relevance of historic bylaws has to be considered alongside the council's PSPO regarding dog fouling and the resources available to the council to monitor and manage dog issues. New signage and instructions for dog owners will be provided following completion of these discussions.