



# PORINGLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Poringland Community Centre, Overtons Way, Poringland, Norfolk, NR14 7WB  
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Press Release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6PM WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2018**

## **PORINGLAND CEMETERY TO CLOSE TO NEW BURIALS**

Poringland Parish Council has been advised by the Environment Agency that it must close the cemetery in Rectory Lane to new burials. This does not affect existing graves which may be re-opened for a second burial at a later date.

The Parish Council commissioned a Tier 2 report following issues of water in graves in the cemetery. The law states that burials may not be made into standing water, and that the water table should be 1 metre below the bottom of a grave. In Poringland, the perched water table is approximately 1 metre above the bottom of the grave, assessing the risk of groundwater pollution as 'moderate'. For this reason, the Environment Agency has stated that the cemetery is not fit for human burial.

The Parish Council has begun making enquiries into new cemetery space within the parish, which will take some years to gain permission and create.

Letters have been sent to around 50 owners of exclusive rights where the grave space has not yet been used advising them that the Parish Council will be revoking their exclusive rights. They have been offered a refund of the fee paid, together with a preferential option to purchase a new burial space if a new cemetery can be provided. Alternatively they can retain their exclusive rights and use the grave space for the interment of ashes, which is still permitted.

Around 110 letters have also been sent to the owners of graves where only one person has been buried, making them aware of the situation and noting that, should this be their intention, the grave will be re-opened for a second burial. Many of these are old graves which are unlikely to be re-opened, however the Council has sought to give reassurance as widely as possible in this matter. There are a further 70 graves which could potentially be re-opened, but which the Council has no up to date contact details for the owners.

Parish Council Chairman Tim Boucher said "This has been an incredibly difficult issue for the Council to deal with. We understand that people wish to be interred with their loved ones, and for this reason have worked with the Environment Agency to agree that double graves with remaining space will be fulfilled. However we have to follow the law, which states that contaminated water from graves may not be removed without adequate water treatment, and that burials must not pollute groundwater. The advice from the Council's specialist cemetery consultants is that there is no suitable mitigation that can be put in place to allow the cemetery to remain open. We have therefore taken the difficult decision to close to all but ashes and re-opening of graves, with immediate effect. We apologise to all those affected,

Office Opening Hours: **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 9.30am to 12.30pm**  
**Thursday: 9.30am to 4pm; Friday: By appointment**

and will work hard to find an alternative solution to enable people to be buried within the parish in future.”

Letters were sent first class on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August and explain the situation and options available. Anyone who owns a grave in Poringland Cemetery and has not received a letter by Monday 13<sup>th</sup> August should contact the Parish Office on 01508 492182, or email [clerk@poringlandparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@poringlandparishcouncil.gov.uk). The full report explaining the groundwater situation is available on the Parish Council website [www.poringlandparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.poringlandparishcouncil.gov.uk).

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

The cemetery in Poringland was first discussed in 1921, however it took until 1937 for a site to be identified, approved, purchased and set up. The first burial took place on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1938.

An extension was bought in 1999, with planning permission obtained in 1996. The land was consecrated for burials in 2002, with a small portion set aside as unconsecrated. The first burial was made in this area in November 2017.

Government guidance states that the principles of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 must be used when assessing groundwater risk in cemeteries to ensure that the use is not causing pollution<sup>1</sup>. All cemetery developments and burials must maintain an unsaturated zone below the level of the base of the graves. In Poringland cemetery, the perched water table is approximately 1 metre above the bottom of the grave.

Water in graves has been a historic problem in Poringland and the Parish Council needed to carry out a professional risk assessment. The results of this assessment presented in the report, and discussions with the Environment Agency have resulted in the Council being permitted only to re-open existing graves.

Should a pollution incident occur and the Council not have carried out these duties, the result can be imprisonment.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cemeteries-and-burials-groundwater-risk-assessments>