



DEVONPORT GENERAL CEMETERY MASTER PLAN 2021-31

JULY 2020



Next Date of Review:	July 2031
Document Controller:	City Growth Executive Manager
Document Reviewer:	Infrastructure and Works Manager
Date Adopted by Council:	27 July 2020
Resolution Number:	20/39



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Devonport General Cemetery Master Plan 2021-31 is a guiding document for the development and management of the Devonport General Cemetery over a ten-year period commencing July 2020. The development of master plans for all Devonport cemeteries is an action of the *Cemetery Strategy 2011-2030*.

The central aim of the Master Plan is:

To preserve the individual and shared heritage value of the Cemetery, while sustainability adapting the site for the current and future needs of the community.

The objectives of the Master Plan are to:

- Identify relevant landscape, heritage and operational constraints and opportunities.
- Understand and respect social and historical values in Cemetery management.
- Provide a strategic approach towards cemetery enhancement that is realistic, achievable and within reasonable resources available to the Council and community.

1.2 Methodology

Development of this Master Plan has involved:

1. Consultation with the general community in the form of an online survey (73 respondents).
2. Onsite meetings with Devonport City Council officers to review consultation outcomes and identify further issues and opportunities.
3. Drafting of guiding principles and actions in line with the purpose of the Cemetery, local site characteristics, community input, and resourcing options.
4. Further feedback from the general community on the proposed principles and actions (20 respondents). Comments aligned with the essence of the Plan with no variations made to the principles and actions.

1.3 Implementation and Review

Devonport City Council will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Plan. Review of actions will occur on an annual basis and align with Council's Annual Plan and Estimates process.

1.4 Related Plans and Strategies

The following Council documents inform the development and implementation of the Master Plan.

- *Devonport City Council Strategic Plan 2009-2030*
- *Cemetery Strategy 2011-2030*
- *Signage Strategy 2017-2020*
- *Pedestrian Strategy 2016-2021*
- *Public Open Space Strategy*

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- *Disability Inclusion Plan 2020-2025*

1.5 Legislation



Council is required to comply with the following Tasmanian legislation related to cemetery management.

- *Burial and Cremation Act 2019*
- *Burial and Cremation Regulations 2015*
- *Local Government Act 1993*

Devonport City Council, being the cemetery manager, has a range of important legal obligations and duties as listed in the *Burial and Cremation Amendment Act 2019*. For example, cemetery managers are responsible for:

- the correct handling and interment (burial) of human remains;
- providing public access to cemeteries;
- administration and record-keeping; and
- general maintenance and upkeep of cemeteries.

As per the Act (section 34.3) maintenance of vaults, graves or monuments are generally not the responsibility of cemetery managers. However, with the passing of time Council may be obligated to repair vaults, graves or monuments that present a risk to public health or safety.



2 Context

2.1 Description

The Devonport General Cemetery is 2.8 hectares of public open space in ownership of Devonport City Council, located on the northern corner of Stony Rise Road and Lawrence Drive. The entrance is located off Lawrence Drive, adjacent to Council's Works Depot.

It is the second largest of the four cemeteries along this road and is within a few hundred metres of St. Olave's and the Congregational Cemetery.

The north and east boundaries are adjacent to a mix of bushland reserve and industrial properties with no foliage on the fence lines to the industrial blocks, including Council's Works Depot. The site is on an east facing incline with the entry at the elevated eastern boundary off Lawrence Drive.

The site is treed, outside the cemetery fenceline, with few trees in the cemetery itself. The front fence, facing Lawrence Drive, is a timber picket fence with a brick entry gate structure. There is a network of defined roads in variable condition, with no dedicated constructed paths.





Location Context – Devonport General Cemetery



Location – Devonport General Cemetery

2.2 History

The town of Devonport, the result of the amalgamation of the twin towns of Formby and Torquay in 1890 did not have a major cemetery until the opening of the “New General Cemetery” late in the year 1922. Prior to this, the dead were interred in one of the three small Torquay burial grounds, the Bluff Cemetery at the Mersey Bluff, or at either of the two small cemeteries at the Don. Burials commenced at the Cemetery, which was on the outskirts of the town, late in 1922, the first being Lizzie Taylor. (Publication T. F.-D., 2001).

There are 3,405 known recorded burials and several unmarked sites. The historical burial records are incomplete. The cemetery is closed to new burials, with only reserved plots and re-openings available.



Unmarked child's grave

2.3 Previously Identified Issues

Identified issues acknowledged in 2009 as outlined in the Cemetery Strategy include:

- Early deterioration of some headstones.
- No interpretive, directional signage or burial information on site.
- Site lacks privacy from adjacent industrial and Council properties.
- Entrance of site requires enhancement.
- Accessibility of site restricted largely due to topographical constraints.

Other than the installation of a sign displaying burial records and locations and some basic signage for each section, the issues identified in 2009 remain largely unaddressed.



Improvements since 2009



3 Consultation Findings

The Devonport General Cemetery Plan draws on community comments raised through an online survey conducted in March 2020. The main findings are summarised below.

The survey attracted 73 responses, with 68.5% or 50 respondents living in the Devonport municipality, 27.4% or 20 respondents living in other parts of Tasmania, 4.1% or 3 respondents from Victoria. The response rate was higher than expected demonstrating the level of community interest in the site.

3.1 Visitation

In terms of visitation, respondents were asked how often they visited the cemetery and the main reason(s).

- 60% of respondents visit the cemetery for special occasions, 16.9% visited monthly and 8.4% respondents visit weekly.
- 81.7% respondents visit to pay their respects, 40.8% visit to conduct research such as genealogy, 16.9% visit as interested in the design and architecture of headstones and plots, 14.8% visit to take some time out and enjoy the peaceful, park like experience.

Other reasons to visit included maintaining family graves, attending burial services and using the cemetery as a walking thoroughfare.

Reason to Visit	Responses	
To pay respects	81.69%	58
Conduct historical research, e.g., researching family tree	40.85%	29
To attend a burial service	1.41%	1
To take some time out, enjoy the peaceful, park like experience	14.08%	10
Interested in the art / design / architecture of headstones and plots	16.90%	12
Other (please specify)	15.49%	11
	Answered	71
	Skipped	2

3.2 Priorities for Management

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of a range of aspects for managing the cemetery. The number and percentage of responses that ranked each aspect as high or very high are outlined in the following table.

Aspect Ranked as High or Very High	Responses	
Heritage value	84.93%	62
Walkways	76.06%	54
Appearance / look / feel	74.65%	53
Landscaping / gardens / trees	70.83%	51
Interpretive / historical signage	59.15%	42
Directional signage in the cemetery	58.33%	42
Roads to access plots	47.06%	32
Parking	43.66%	31
Seating	40.84%	29
Shelter	25.35%	18

Additional issues identified through staff consultation:

- Lack of safe pedestrian route along Stony Rise Road.
- Lack of community awareness about responsibilities for restoration and management of graves, headstones and monuments.
- Improvements required to online cemetery search portal - i.e., difficult to determine which cemetery deceased person is located; no online site map available.

3.3 Improvements

Respondents were asked for their suggestions to improve the Cemetery. The open-ended question attracted a variety of responses with similar themes. The top three improvements suggested include:

- General maintenance (weed control, tree pruning, litter).
- Plot maintenance/ restoration.
- Road/walkway accessibility.

Improvement	Responses
General maintenance (weed control, tree pruning, litter)	10
Plot maintenance/ restoration	7
Road/walkway accessibility	7
Approach service clubs/volunteers/historical society to assist with hands-on maintenance and raising funds	4
Improve drainage / erosion control	4
Respect history, historical interpretation /memorial area	4
Additional landscaping	3
Signage – directional within cemetery	3
Repair fence – concrete	2
Construct boundary fence	1
Improve entry/exit point	1
Install playground outside cemetery	1
More seating	1
Greater security	1

4 Principles and Actions

Three key principles that underpin the development of the Master Plan have been drawn from community and staff consultation. The principles and recommended actions are summarised below, with a detailed action plan provided on page 11.

4.1 Conserving Heritage Values

Cemeteries may be the only place where a person's life is recorded. Unusual examples of art and craft may also be found in the design of monuments which portray views of death often quite different from current customs. Recent burials in the cemetery may also provide valuable social insights over time of history and changes in taste, custom and design. The cemetery is culturally significant to many visitors as a source of genealogy and the resting place of many prominent individuals in Devonport's history.

ACTIONS:

- Develop and promote information regarding plot restoration and maintenance.
- Encourage the community to be involved in the park's maintenance and development.
- Promote historical significance and improve interpretive elements of the cemetery.
- Improve digital access to Cemetery records.



4.2 Improving Access In and Around the Cemetery

This principle focuses on assisting visitors and pedestrians find their way around and through the cemetery. Pedestrian and vehicle movement should be simple, convenient and a positive experience for all visitors. Topographical constraints will restrict Council's ability to provide inclusive access to all parts of the cemetery.

An opportunity exists to utilise and upgrade parts of the existing path network as a pedestrian access through the site, in lieu of a footpath on the adjacent Stony Rise Road, legitimising a use of the site which is known to occur now. 'Walkways' were one of the most prominent topics raised by respondents. This formally diversifies the use of the site and potentially increases visitation to the site, which can assist in delivering on other actions.

ACTIONS:

- Update wayfinding signage within the cemetery in accordance with the Signage Strategy

- Review maintenance service levels and asset renewal program (landscaping, road/path maintenance etc)
- Improve main entry, and review access points to improve pedestrian / user safety
- Construct path through the site for use by cemetery visitors and pedestrians in the area



Cemetery main entrance and rotunda

4.3 Enhancing the Cemetery Experience

The cemetery is visited foremostly by people coming to the burial grounds of the deceased. However, this group is expected to decline long term. Other visitors also visit the site to see, understand and research heritage and historical elements and to enjoy the peaceful, park like experience. These are the groups that the site must cater for in the future. As part of the master plan, the following actions are proposed for enhancing amenity with areas for seating, pausing and reflection. This further includes landscaping opportunities.

ACTIONS:

- Install seating in priority locations
- Progressively expand the vegetative landscape on all boundaries
- Review public lighting in conjunction with path and signage improvements



Landscaping along cemetery boundaries will improve amenity

4.4 Delivery of Actions

The delivery of the 11 actions are anticipated to require a variety of delivery methods and funding sources. Community involvement is a key resource, which based on the level of engagement to date, shows potential. Council will be required to contribute funding allocations of around \$300,000 over the 10 year period, although some is already nominally committed in asset renewal programs. External funding through relevant grant programs is also required.

The infrastructure improvements proposed in the action plan are shown in the plan below. The locations and details, where provided, are conceptual and should be confirmed during the design phase of each project.



Action Plan – Concept Layout

Action Plan

Devonport General Cemetery Master Plan

No	Action:	Year Planned							Priority: H,M,L	Resources: A-OPEX F-OPEX F-CAPEX	Cost Estimate (\$)	Responsible Department
		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026+				
Principle 1: Conserving Heritage Values												
1.1	Develop and promote information regarding plot restoration and maintenance								H	A-OPEX	2,000	Infrastructure & Works
1.2	Encourage the community to be involved in the park's maintenance and development								M	A-OPEX	TBC	Community Services
1.3	Promote historical significance and Improve interpretive elements of the cemetery								M	External funds	TBC	Community Services
1.4	Improve digital access to cemetery records								M	F-OPEX	TBC	Infrastructure & Works
Principle 2: Improving Access In and Around the Cemetery												
2.1	Update wayfinding signage within the cemetery in accordance with the Signage Strategy								H	F-CAPEX	10-20,000	Infrastructure & Works
2.2	Review maintenance service levels and asset renewal program								H	A-OPEX	5,000	Infrastructure & Works
2.3	Improve main entry, and review access points to improve pedestrian / user safety								M	F-CAPEX	30,000	Infrastructure & Works
2.4	Construct path for cemetery visitors and pedestrians								M	F-CAPEX	150,000	Infrastructure & Works
Principle 3: Enhancing the Cemetery Experience												
3.1	Install seating in priority locations								H	F-CAPEX	15-30,000	Infrastructure & Works
3.2	Progressively expand the vegetative landscape on all boundaries								M	F-OPEX	10-20,000	Infrastructure & Works
3.3	Review public lighting in conjunction with path and signage improvements								M	F-CAPEX	TBC	Infrastructure & Works