

**PRESTON UNDER SCAR PARISH COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2026
REPORT OF THE CLERK AND COUNCILLOR HIGHAM**

CEMETERY – UPDATE AND REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

1. NEW CEMETERY POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

At its last meeting, the Parish Council resolved to approve the draft Cemetery Policy and associated appendices as submitted to the meeting subject to any minor amendments the Clerk in consultation with Councillor Higham, considered necessary in the interests of consistency and clarity and that any changes of substance considered necessary to the Policy/appendices be submitted to the Parish Council for approval.

Those documents have now been reviewed. No changes of substance have been identified and in the light of that, it is **recommended that the new Cemetery Policy, revised Regulations and all associated documents take effect from 1 November 2026**. This date will allow time to upload relevant documents to the Council's website, send them to local undertakers and for an email to be sent round the village.

2. CEMETERY RISK ASSESSMENT

At its last meeting the Parish Council approved a Cemetery Risk Assessment. This identified two actions required to mitigate identified risks. These were the need for two notices on the railings/gates as follows:

- Name and contact details for the Parish Council and the Cemetery postcode, for use if need arises to call the Emergency Services to the site
- Notice to users to warn that ground is uneven, there are trip hazards.

A noticeboard has now been put up on the gates and a notice with the above details, along with a notice about the carrying out of periodic memorial inspections and the need to lay down any headstones that are unstable and at risk of toppling. To enable the Council to build a list of family members to contact if a headstone or grave requires attention, this notice also includes a request for family members visiting graves to provide the Clerk with their current contact details for this purpose. Thanks are due to Dave Rothwell for installing the noticeboard at no cost to the Parish Council.

3. MEMORIAL INSPECTIONS

Councillor Higham and the Clerk carried out a safety inspection of all memorials and grave surrounds on 24 August 2026.

A total of 7 memorials were found to be unsafe, requiring immediate attention. These memorials were carefully and respectfully laid down in accordance with safety requirements. Of those, at the time of writing this report, only one headstone remains laid down. A further 7

memorials, whilst safe at the time of inspection, gave rise to minor concerns and will therefore be inspected in 12 months' time, to ensure they have not deteriorated any further.

The remainder of the memorials were considered safe and should be reassessed in 5 years' time or as part of any other check that may occur – for example when checking memorials around a planned burial ahead of the excavation of the grave.

4. GROUND CONDITIONS IN THE CEMETERY

Over the summer months the amount of rabbit activity in the cemetery appears to have been much greater than previously. There are many new rabbit holes and scrapes, including two into a recent burial. In this case the family of the deceased have requested permission to tidy up the grave and temporarily erect a rabbit fence around the Grave until the Grave has greened over and become less attractive to Rabbit attention. The Clerk has advised the family that they may tidy up the grave, but **Councillors are requested to consider the request to temporarily erect a rabbit fence around the grave.**

There are other instances where rabbit activity has resulted in floral tributes being scattered around a grave and soil scattered across graves. This is distressing for family members visiting the graves concerned and others visiting the cemetery. The Clerk has received 2 complaints over the summer about the damage caused and requesting the Council to consider what it can do to try to reduce the extent of the damage now occurring.

The wire netting across the gate and fence railings at the bottom of the Cemetery Extension was found to have come adrift and has been refixed so that rabbits should be less able to gain access via that route but, **in the light of the complaints received, the Council is requested to consider any further action that might be taken to try to reduce or make good the level of rabbit damage in the Cemetery.**

5. AREAS RESERVED FOR THE INTERMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS

There are 2 plots in the current cemetery which have been reserved for the burial of cremated remains and it would be helpful if the Parish Council determine the number of remains each plot should accommodate. Having considered the need to ensure that each interment does not disturb or encroach on any previous interments that have taken place, **it is recommended that a maximum of 2 interments be allowed in each plot.**

The raised area along the roadside wall of the Cemetery has also been designated as an area for the interment of cremated remains. It has not been used for this purpose to date. It currently "houses" the cemetery seat and waste bin, for both of which it is a convenient and level location. **Councillors are requested to consider whether this area should continue to be designated as an area for the interment of cremated remains, particularly given the intention to designate part of the cemetery extension as a Garden of Remembrance.**

6. REQUEST FOR APPLICATION OF RESIDENTS CHARGE FOR THE PURCHASE OF A BURIAL PLOT FOR A FORMER RESIDENT

Councillors have been sent separately details of a request made on behalf of a former

resident of the Parish who has not lived here for some years that, given the family's long association with the village and burial of a number of close family members and friends in the cemetery, the Council apply the residents' rate for the purchase of an Exclusive Right of Burial.

Councillors are requested to determine the request.

5. REVIEW OF EXISTING FEES AND CHARGES

The current Cemetery fees were set in 2019. Unlike many other Cemeteries, the Council charges a one-off fee for the purchase of an exclusive right of burial/interment of cremated remains. This means that bereaved families do not need to pay any additional burial/interment fees or any fee for erecting a memorial to the Parish Council. This reduces the financial burden on families of the bereaved in the period after their loss and reduces the administrative burden on the Council.

The current fees are as follows:

	Below 16 years	Residents*	Non - residents
Burial	No charge	£350	£700
Ashes interred in a grave plot	No charge	£350	£700
Ashes interred elsewhere	No charge	£175	£350

*Fees applicable to former long-term residents of the Parish are considered by the Council on a case-by-case basis.

A table showing the fees charged by a number of local cemeteries is attached as an Appendix. This shows that the other cemeteries looked at charge separate fees for individual items, meaning their overall charges are greater than the Council's current charges.

Currently, income from the cemetery does not, in most years, cover the cost of maintaining the cemetery. Research indicates that total inflation in the UK since 2019 is 30%. Increasing the current fees by this level would result in the following:

	Below 16 years	Residents*	Non - residents
Burial	No charge	£455	£910
Ashes interred in a grave plot	No charge	£455	£910
Ashes interred elsewhere	No charge	£227.50	£455

Councillors are requested to consider whether the Council should increase current cemetery fees to reflect the increase in inflation since they were last reviewed, move towards a position where the charges will meet the cost to the Council of maintaining the cemetery and to bring them more into line with fees charged elsewhere and to agree to review these charges annually in the future.

Councillors are also requested to determine the date from which any new charges will take effect

7. CEMETERY EXTENSION LAYOUT AND PLANTING

A number of issues remain to be resolved before a formal plan can be developed for the Cemetery Extension. These include:

- The precise route of the water pipe which runs east to west under the extension. This is needed to ensure that burial plots and any planting do not encroach on the pipe itself.
- The extent of any area to be reserved for the interment of cremated remains and as a garden of remembrance – this is still under consideration. Councillor Higham will report further at the meeting.
- The nature and location of further planting/soft landscaping areas, bearing in mind the grant received from Councillor Sedgwick's Locality Budget towards a biodiversity project in the extension.
- The need to provide a suitably surfaced vehicle access into the extension for grave digging equipment and also for a hearse. This will also require a turning area. These need as far as possible, to be in keeping with the location and may require planning permission. The likely cost is unknown but could be considerable. For planning purposes, it may be prudent to seek indicative costs in the near future

Comparison prices Cemeteries (March 2026) - in all cases non residents fee is double

Service	Preston under Scar	Middleham	Leyburn	Brompton on Swale	Thirsk
Exclusive Right of Burial to a specified plot for 99 years	£350.00	£345.00	£250.00 Excl Right burial ashes £100	£420.00	£278.00 Garden Rest £145
Refund on Exclusive rights		50% of sum paid if within 10 yrs of original reservation	50% of sum paid if within 10 yrs of original reservation		
Under 16	Support for child funeral costs (Children's Funeral Fund for England): What it does - GOV.UK		Up to 12 months Nil 1 to 16 £55.00	No fee	Up to 1 month Nil To 16 £83
Burial Over 16	£350 (ie purchase of EROB)	£402.50	£250.00	£200.00	£281.00
Ashes in Existing Grave		£143.75	£100.00		
Ashes interred in a grave plot	£350.00 (ie purchase of EROB)				£83.00
Ashes interred in the Cremation area	£175.00	£110.00 plus reservation fee £115.00		£80.00 Plus purchase plot £150.00	£145.00 in Garden of Rest
Headstone		Tablet. Plaque £86.25	£75.00	£60.00	£73.00
Additional inscriptions			£50.00		£34.00
Memorial plaque (Garden of Remembrance)		£86.25	£50.00		
Transfer of Exclusive Right of Burial			£50.00		
Searches of the Register of Burials		£10		£20 per hour	

