

Greener Goodbyes

Every funeral can be a greener funeral. Here's a short explanation of how.

We take the effects our business may have on the environment very seriously and make sure we adopt a responsible approach to limiting the impact. That's why we take steps to minimise our carbon emissions and offset those that we do make. For example, as well as being sourced from Forestry Stewardship Council accredited wood, all our coffins are produced using a zero carbon emission process without the use of hazardous chemicals. In fact, all of our funerals are environmentally and ethically responsible, but we do recognise that some may wish to make sure that any funeral arrangements they make are as entirely carbon neutral as possible.

Burial or cremation

One of the most commonly asked questions about green funerals is whether cremation or burial is more environmentally responsible. When deciding between the two, much comes down to individual choice and preference but research has shown that generally cremation has a lower carbon footprint than a traditional cemetery burial. This is partially because the process of decay emits methane, which is more detrimental to the atmosphere than the carbon dioxide produced from cremation. In addition, the ongoing up-keep and maintenance of cemeteries involve staff and machinery which in turn produce carbon emissions. A burial site close by will help to reduce any environmental impact involved in travelling to visit and tend the grave. In addition, natural burials are sometimes possible, where the land returns to a natural habitat. We will advise you if this is an available option in this location.

Cremation, which forms part of most UK funeral arrangements, uses gas to fuel combustion and the coffin material itself adds fuel and so reduces the amount of gas required. That's why it's important, in environmental terms, that the coffin has a high fuel value and the timber should come from a sustainable source accredited by the Forestry Stewardship Council. Cardboard coffins have minimal fuel value and so may result in a higher adverse environmental impact when exposed to the cremation process. In order to avoid climate changing pollution, plastic is best avoided and so the coffin lining can be made of natural fibres and the handles can also be constructed from wood.

Funeral vehicles

Having numerous cars travelling to the funeral ceremony is probably the largest contributor to the total carbon dioxide produced by the whole event and can also cause congestion. Our limousines carry six passengers in comfort and so by having mourners travel together from a central collection point, the impact on the environment can be reduced in comparison to a fleet of private vehicles. In addition, many people find that the close company of others around them brings some comfort and nurtures more of a bonding experience at what can be the most difficult of times.

Flowers

Seasonal flowers grown in the UK are less likely to have required heating during cultivation and, of course, have not been flown in from overseas. If you are conscious of waste, the wrappings and any other decorative elements should be bio-degradable. Instead of flowers, you may wish to instead ask for donations to be made to a charity, environmental project or community legacy.

A natural living memorial

Many people decide that the living presence of a tree both makes both a fitting memorial and enhances the environment. You can choose a deciduous sapling, complete with planting guide, wood stake, tree guard and engraved name plate, to plant where you wish or donate your tree to the establishment or replenishment of woodland in the UK. Alternatively, you can convert your tree to a gift donation to sponsor the preservation of rainforest overseas.

Leaving a community legacy

If you wish to rebalance the carbon dioxide emissions involved in a typical funeral, you can choose to convert this into a donation of £25 to Groundwork UK. Your donation will fund energy saving initiatives which will rebalance the likely CO2 emissions of the funeral you are arranging over a two to three year period.

If you wish to know more about any of these ways to arrange a green funeral, we are happy to discuss your options.
