

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Bereavement Services
Annual Report 2025 - 2026**



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Bereavement Services

Annual Report

2025 - 2026

Introduction

Bereavement Services is a key provider within the Council's portfolio. It provides a service unlike any other, often in a highly charged emotional context for the bereaved. This can be very challenging to everyone concerned, not least the staff who deliver this service all year round.

Many factors affect the number of funerals that are held by Bereavement Services. These factors are out of the control of the Bereavement Services team and are influenced by circumstances such as the national death rate.

The service has numerous Health and safety challenges found only in this industry.

This report looks at what Bereavement Services has achieved over the last financial year and how it is performing in the marketplace.

Background

Bereavement Services are the main provider of cremations and burials within Bath and its surrounding area. As such, it caters for the bereaved population of Bath as the need arises. In addition to this, a vast range of memorial options for ashes (cremated remains) are also available within Haycombe Cemetery coupled with options for memorial trees and benches.

Bereavement Services is legally obligated to facilitate public health funerals under the Public Health Act (Control of diseases) 1984. This means where a person dies within the geographical boundary of Bath and North East Somerset Council, and there is no next of kin or anyone willing or able to take on the responsibility to arrange a funeral, this responsibility falls to the Local Council.

The Council's Bereavement Services team discharges its duty through the operation of 1 crematorium, 2 open cemeteries and 34 closed cemeteries and churchyards.

The main customers of Bereavement Services are Funeral Directors; however, residents can arrange their own loved one's funeral, purchase grave plots and memorials for ashes (cremated remains) directly from us.

Bereavement Services are responsible for the administration, management and operation of Haycombe Cemetery, Haycombe Crematorium, Harptree Cemetery, and the council's closed cemeteries.

The team of twenty comprises of a Service Manager; a part-time Assistant Manager Cemeteries, a part-time Assistant Manager Crematorium, a Cemetery Senior Supervisor; a Crematorium Supervisor; five full-time Bereavement Consultants (working in reception); and two Crematorium Technicians who also have grounds maintenance duties in addition to overseeing funeral services in the crematorium chapel and performing crematory duties.

As of June 2019, the cemetery grounds and grave digging work are undertaken by the Bereavement Services internal workforce consisting of a Cemetery Senior

Supervisor, two Team Leaders and six Cemetery Operatives. A rolling program of memorial inspections is included in these works alongside grounds maintenance of Haycombe Cemetery, the outer cemeteries and all the grave digging across other council cemetery sites.

Standard office opening hours are 9.00am until 4.00pm, however, staff are available to answer telephone enquiries until 4.30pm. Saturday funeral services are held on request, for which overtime costs are incurred.

In November 2022, our Direct Cremation options were introduced and made available throughout the day, Monday to Friday. This included an attended direct cremation option, enabling up to six mourners to attend via our Orchard entrance, offering a simple and respectful opportunity for families to be present. Alongside this, we introduced a price-sensitive full-service cremation option conducted by our in-house celebrant at 9.00am, providing an affordable and dignified alternative for families

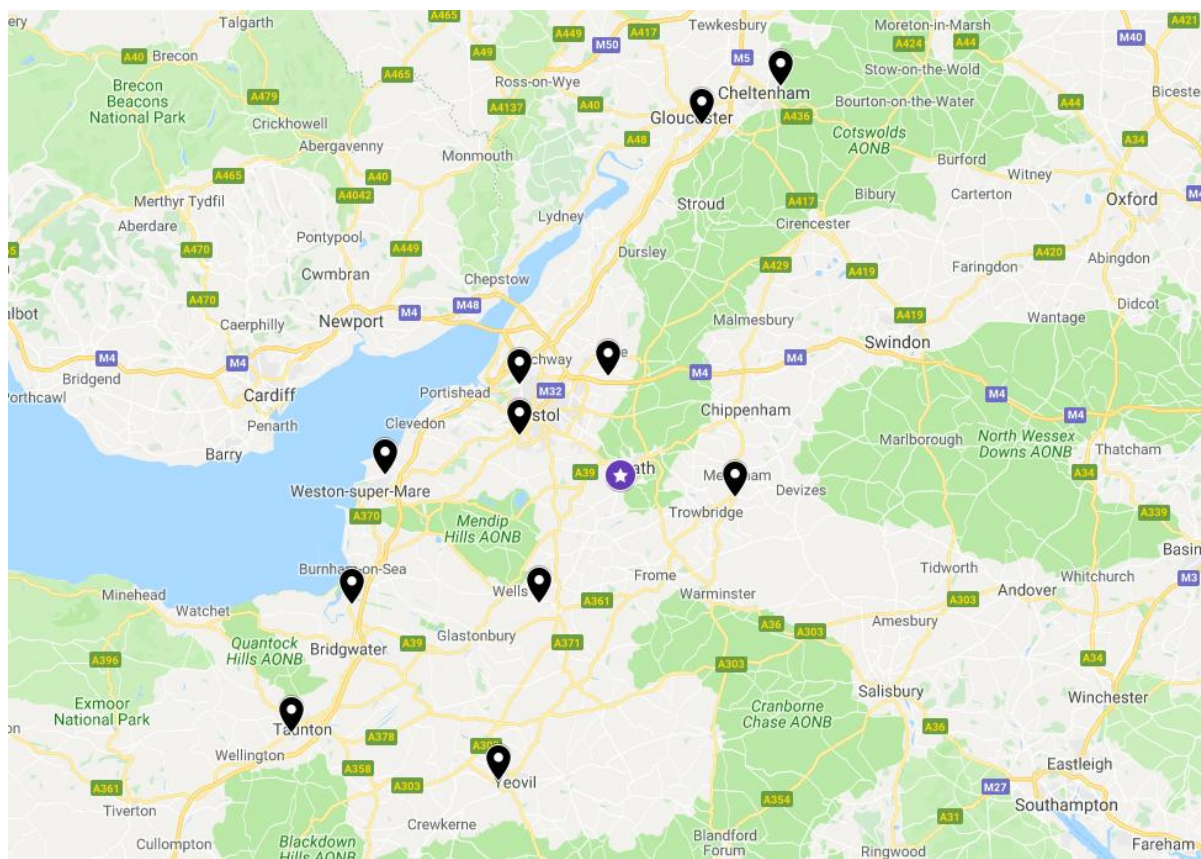
These services were reviewed in October 2025 to align with other local crematoriums, when we extended chapel service times from 30 minutes to 45 minutes to provide families with more time. We also introduced additional options, including an early morning service at 9:00am and a lower-cost, price-sensitive service at 10:00am.

These initiatives aim to address funeral poverty while also providing greater choice through more affordable options for the bereaved. Our in-house celebrant remains available to conduct funerals, memorial services, and ashes interments upon request.

Our audio-visual system has also undergone several upgrades, including the installation of additional screens within the chapel foyers and the introduction of functionality to display tributes in full-screen mode during live-streamed services.

The competition

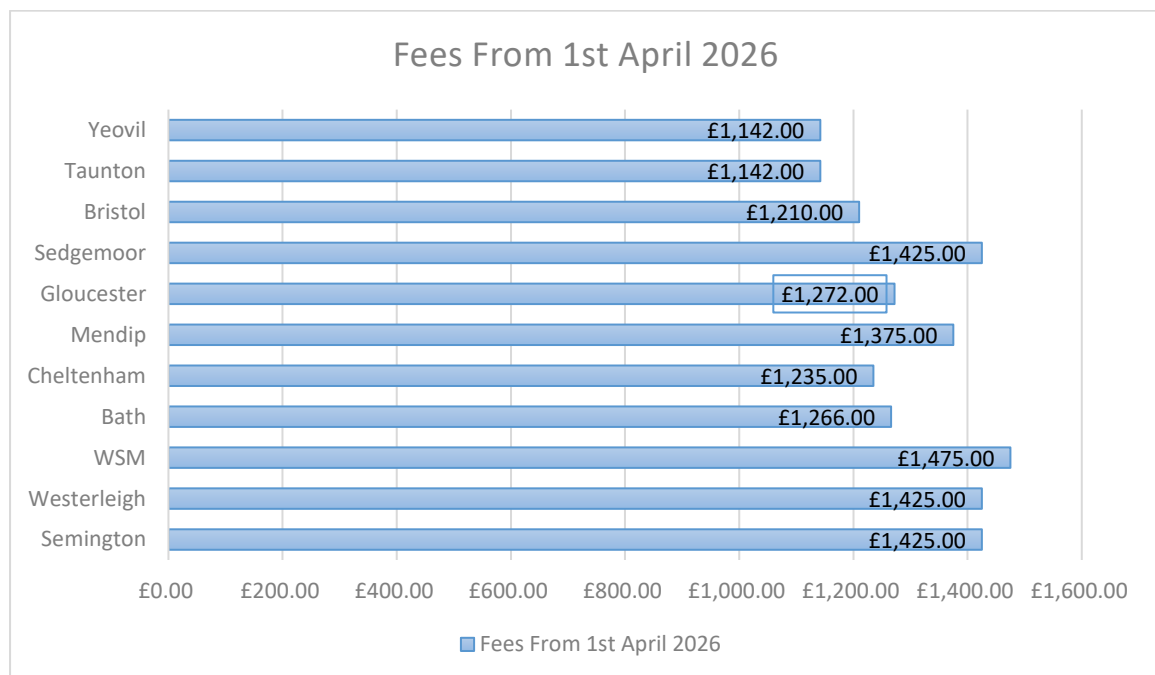
- Haycombe Cemetery and Crematorium is within proximity to 11 neighbouring crematoria.
- Five of these are operated by the private sector.
- All are within 90 minutes travelling time of Haycombe.



Fees and Charges, Cremation.

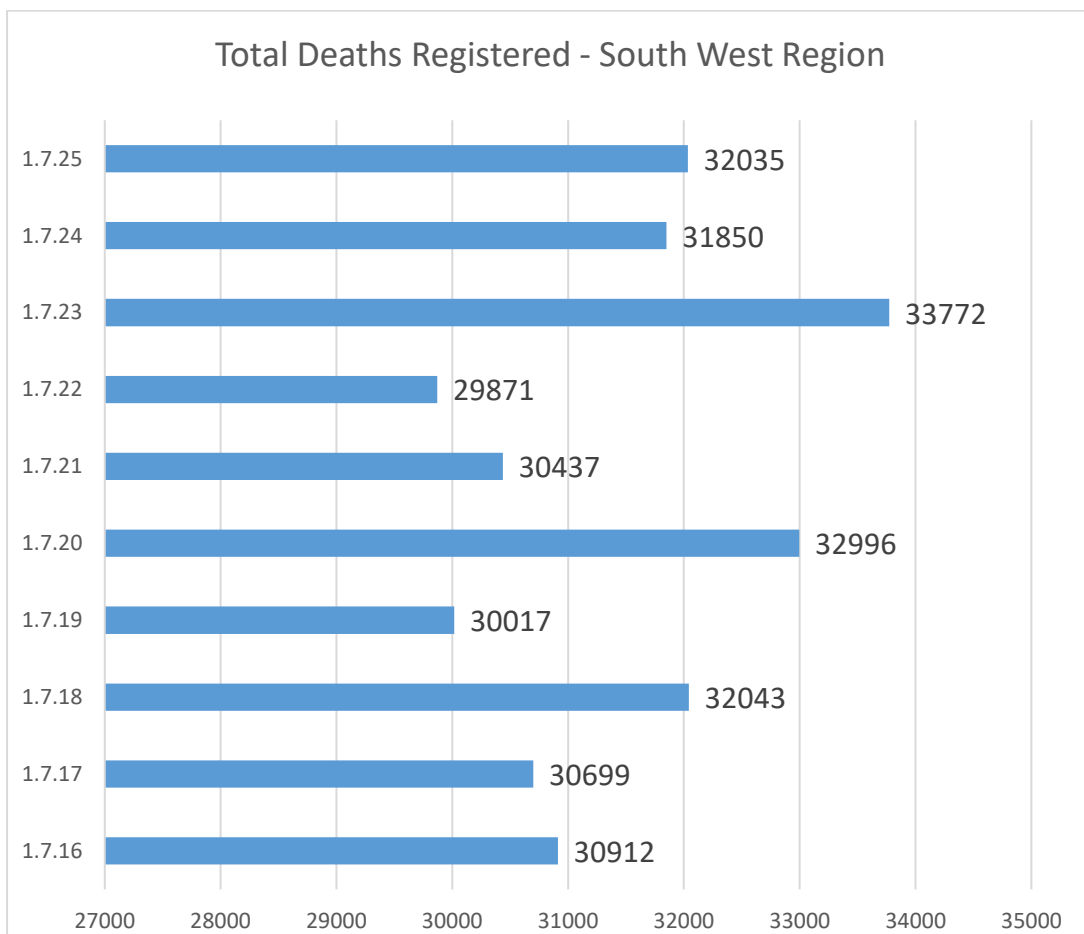
Bath crematorium sits in seventh place regarding its fee structure for a standard adult cremation, across eleven of the most local Crematoria. Some of these facilities are modern but many have had substantial investment over recent times.

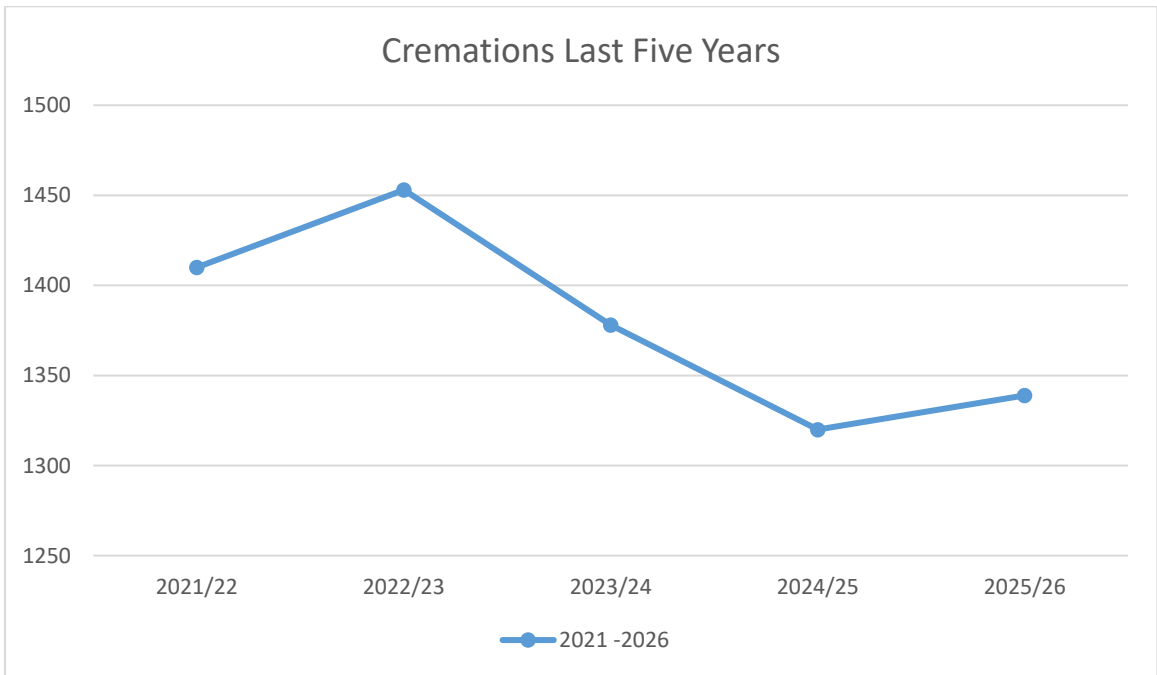
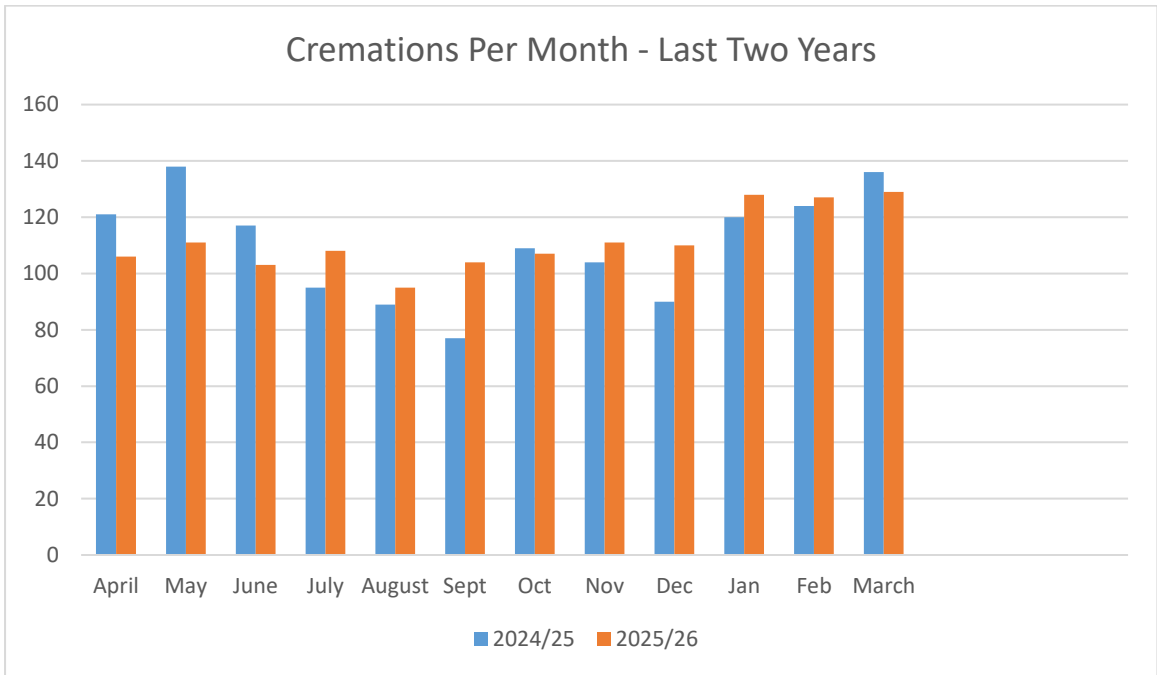
During the Summer of 2022 Haycombe had a full refurbishment of the crematorium chapel, the installation of a new disabled exit ramp and steps, and the waiting room was redecorated along with the installation of digital screens for ease of viewing. These same digital screens were replaced again in 2025 to facilitate a greater visual experience. Over the early summer period of 2023 the Top Chapel now named the Hilltop Chapel had a complete internal refurbishment, offering a more ambient and befitting environment.



The crematorium

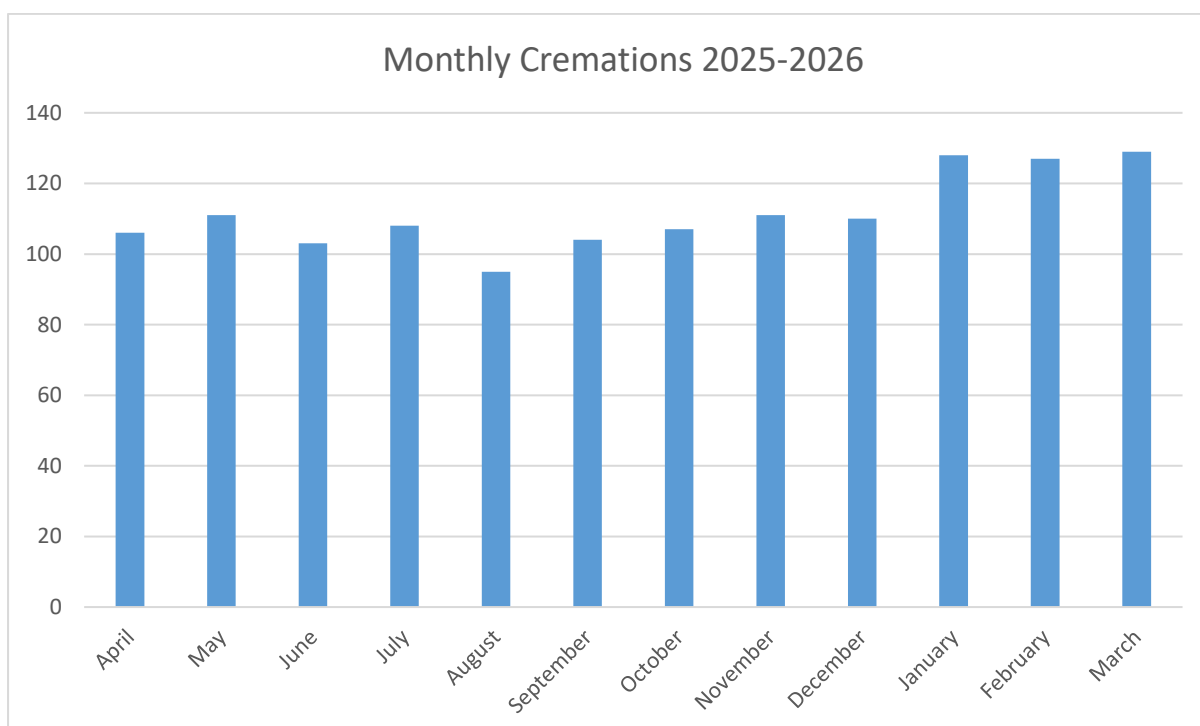
- Haycombe carried out 1339 cremations in 2025-2026.
- The national statistics office shows 278,008 deaths in England for the first 6 months of 2025. This figure decreased to 256,048 for the last six months of 2025.
- There are 20 crematoria within the southwest region.

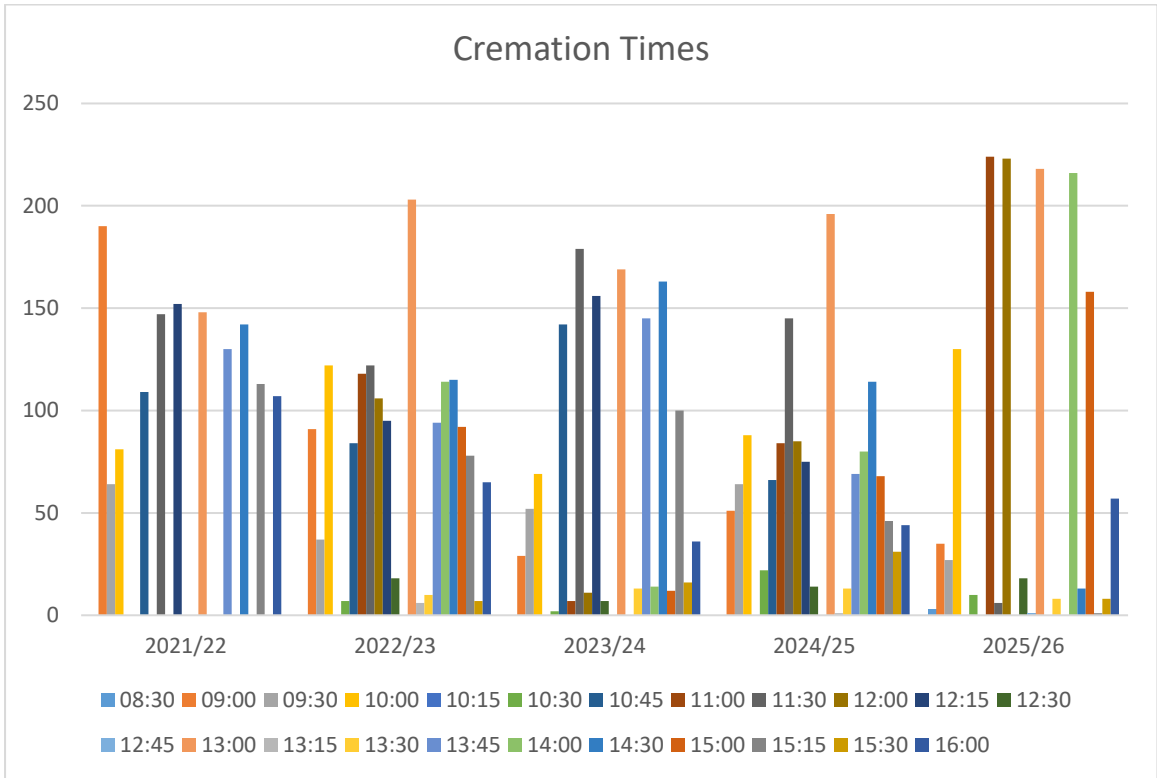




The service

- Our busiest cremation service times are between 11.00am and 3.00pm.
- Unattended Direct Cremations are available throughout the day from 08.30am until 3.30pm.
- An early morning service is available at 9.00am or 9.15am for a service duration of 45 minutes.
- A price sensitive option available at 10.00am or 10.15am for a service duration of 45 minutes.
- Standard services are available from 11.00am until 4.00pm for a service duration of 45 minutes.
- Our busiest months for cremation services in 2025-26 were January, February, and March.





The Memorials

Memorial Sales Trends	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	Notes
Englishcombe & Valley View	46	26	30	47	20	It is likely that sales of these have declined due to the incline of the site and the option for other memorials
Circle Gardens	16	10	25	12	7	These proved very popular, and a new circle garden has been created.
Sanctums	5	4	9	8	6	
Coppice / QEII Tree Memorials	10	14	11	16	11	
Shrubbery Kerbstones	26	15	19	15	10	
Towers (Glade & Meadow)	14	12	14	12	11	Also, 3 x Glade mushroom plaques
Book of Remembrance	72	74	69	74	44	
Benches	10	12	9	3	6	
Pergola Garden			25	15	24	The Pergola Garden has now re-opened, and additional memorial plots made available. In conjunction with this a new sanctum area is being created at the entrance to this garden
Sunset Walk	-	-	-	2	14	A further bespoke cremated remains memorial section named Sunset Walk was created offering additional options for the bereaved.

The service development programme.

There have been several achievements for Bereavement Services with more initiatives to come.

When	Achievements
Early 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cremators re-blocked and new filtration tank installed. • Re-opening of The Pergola Garden at Haycombe for additional cremated remains memorial plots. • Website updated with added information along with a funeral diary detailing funeral services for that week. • Increased usage of our Facebook page to itemize events and updates within Bereavement Services. • First beehive was installed at Haycombe. • The first stage of planting of the Serenity Garden by the Grow for Life Charity took place.
2023-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased memorialisation offer – tree’s, scattering areas new memorial options. • Renaming of the individual chapels within Haycombe to The Hilltop Chapel & The Valley Chapel • The internal refurbishment of the Top Chapel, toilets, and Book of Remembrance Room • Extension and development of the Butterfly baby’s section • Installation of gas meters for each individual cremator • Additional beehive installed and co-located with the current one. • An additional excavator / digger purchased to spread the workload. • Sunset Walk was created and installed to allow additional memorial plots. • The release of the Bereavement Service newsletter • Bereavement Services worked closely with the Avon Wildlife Trust in establishing and enhancing existing biodiversity habitats within 4 of the cemeteries over a 10-year programme
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful application and granting of the prestigious Green Flag Award for Haycombe. • Haycombe purchases their first two fully electric ride on mowers, replacing the old petrol driven mowers • Our 3 yearly inspection was carried out by the Federation of Burial & Cremation Authorities FBCA during which our service was rated as Excellent, and it was also noted that we achieved one of the highest Environmental scores they had issued in recent years. • An order was placed for 2 fully electric flat-bed trucks due for delivery early Summer 2026, these will replace the aged existing diesel trucks.