

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 APRIL 2009

SUBJECT: DIGITISATION OF BURIAL RECORDS: PROGRESS

**JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES AND
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

Abstract: This Report advises the Committee of progress made in developing the project for digitisation of the Angus burial records and recommends a web based solution for providing on-line public access to the records (and associated digital cemetery maps) in conjunction with a national portal web site www.deceasedonline.com.

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee

1. Note the completion of Phase 1 of the project covering the digitisation and indexing of the 203,000 burial records in the Angus cemeteries together with the partial digital mapping of the main cemeteries (Section 3 refers);
2. Note the "options appraisal" for putting the records on-line being Phase 2 of the project (Section 4 and Appendix 1 refers);
3. Agree to implement the preferred on-line option of using www.deceasedonline.com with a joint agreement between the Council and company to govern copyright protection of the Council's records, annual costs and revenue sharing arrangements via a time limited agreement (with a break) in the first instance (Para 4.5 & para 6.3 refers);
4. Agree to delegate the Head of Economic Development in conjunction with the Head of Law & Administration to negotiate and conclude the terms of this on-line agreement;
5. Note that some of the Angus data and associated digital maps has been trialled on www.deceasedonline.com (for demonstration and testing purposes). Should the Council agree Recommendations 3 and 4 above, then the full data and maps will be added progressively for the main Angus cemeteries and the remaining 63 much smaller cemeteries during the remainder 2009; and
6. Note that once the bulk of the data (80% +) is accessible on-line, the new product will be launched (July/August 2009) and a marketing campaign will commence.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Members will recall that Report 782/07 was approved by Infrastructure Services Committee on 28 August 2007 (Article 38 refers) giving approval for the Burial Records Digitisation project. This Report updates progress to date and makes

recommendations for the preferred web based solution for on-line access by the public world wide.

3 PROGRESS: DIGITISATION AND MAPPING OF THE RECORDS

3.1 As indicated in Report 782/07, the scale of the number of records and the task of scanning the handwritten book registers followed by the indexing of each individual record of the burials in 72 cemeteries across Angus was an ambitious task. In practical terms, the introduction of computerised burial records data (since 2004) has slightly eased the task. The project has combined the handwritten data (mostly from the 1850s) with the computer entry data up to the present day.

3.2 This will result in significant benefits to Angus Council as follows:

- The historic data which had to be physically searched book by book, will now be searched via a computer index in a fraction of the staff-time resource. This will improve the Council's customer enquiry service;
- The burial register books, some of which are old and fragile can now be safely archived and protected as part of the cultural heritage of Angus for future generations. Conversely, any catastrophic failure of electronic records in the future will have the safeguard of the existence of the actual paper based archive;
- The availability of digital records 'on-line' should appeal to the global 'Scots diaspora' with ancestral links to the Angus area – allowing them to easily access their ancestral heritage (this will enhance the Council's international golf and tartan day promotions);
- Since the burial records of individuals relate to the burial 'lair' in which they are buried, there is additional information available to the family historian i.e. additional information about direct or indirect family members buried in the same 'lair'. In the past this was a reflection of relative poverty combined with extended kinship of families where the extended nuclear family stuck together in life and death. The communal lair is therefore a boon to those global family historians (and professional genealogists);
- In addition to the burial data, the project has also digitised the main cemetery maps. This mapping currently covers some three quarters of the Angus burials. The on-line search software will allow the on-line global user to download the data and the exact cemetery map location on the ground, even if there is no grave marker; and
- The project will add to the Angus ancestral tourism product portfolio and will assist our marketing of Angus. The product launch in July/August will be used to promote the 2009 Roots Festival.

4 PUTTING THE BURIAL RECORDS ON-LINE

4.1 The original Report 782/07 exempted the project from normal tendering arrangements in terms of Financial Regulations 16.3.2(b) and 16.3.4. This exemption to use Gower as the preferred contractor and "on-line software" supplier, was given because the Council's existing "Gower" burial records software EPILOG (used since 2002), would provide the central data set that

automatically links to the scanned records and digital maps of the cemeteries on-line – and it would not have been sensible or practicable to seek alternative software solutions (since this would have involved additional workload and costs in data transfer).

- 4.2 Now that all the records have been digitalised the data must be made available online for promotion to a global customer base. Having evaluated various possibilities there are only two options available for online hosting.
- 4.3 Appendix 2 to this report gives more detail on the advantages and disadvantages of the two available on-line options – as summarised below. An earlier option (examined by the project steering group) of using www.scotlandsppeople.com was discounted because this national portal does not feature “burial records or digital mapping”

Options Appraisal for Web Hosting:

Option 1: www.tayroots.com (as originally envisaged for the project – this is an “in-house” option using the established website as the vehicle)

Advantages:

- all revenues would be retained by the Council
- the presence of the burial records on this site could attract and drive more web traffic to the site which would create synergy with our ancestral tourism marketing efforts

Disadvantages:

- significant additional ‘one off’ and recurring costs to the Council – in IT support and marketing costs
- the site being stand alone would not benefit from the global exposure and associated marketing of a UK based portal site
- this option has limited graphic capabilities

Option 2: www.deceasedonline.com (DOL) - Commercial

Advantages:

- ready made, tried and tested web based solution
- value for money – arising from cost savings to the Council
- auto update of new burial data in future keeping the site up to date
- all IT support / infrastructure provided by DOL
- all marketing carried out by DOL
- high resolution images and cemetery maps
- a national portal with higher level web traffic and hits compared with a stand alone site

Disadvantages:

- Sharing revenue with Deceased on Line – although this is offset by cost savings to the Council
- The level of future dependency (by the Council) must be addressed

- 4.4 **Value for Money** -The tables below compares the two options in terms of ‘one-off’ costs and recurring costs:

Option 1 (hosted on www.tayroots.com) – “in-house”

Gower Contract		Additional IT & Marketing Costs to the Council
One – Off Costs	£11,625 - £15,050	Circa £10,000 +
Recurring Costs p.a	£2490	£750 per day as required
Marketing Costs	nil	£2000 per annum (ECDEV budget limited)

Option 2 (hosted on www.deceasedonline.com (DOL)) - Commercial

Gower Contract		Additional IT & Marketing Costs to the Council
One – Off Costs	£9650	Nil
Recurring Costs p.a	£3000	Nil
Marketing Costs	Borne by DOL	Nil

From the tables above, Option 2 (DOL) gives a saving to the Council (on the existing contract) of between £2075 - £5400, with no additional ‘One off’ or recurring IT or marketing costs for the Council. The slightly higher recurring annual hosting cost in Option 2 includes an automated update of Angus data using DOL’s “Harvester Service” which captures new burial records added to the Council’s EPILOG system in the future – and will ensure the on-line records are fully up to date.

- 4.5 **Conclusions -** It is considered that the advantages of Deceased on Line outweigh the benefits of a stand alone solution on the Council site (with minimal disadvantages). The Head of Community Services, as client for burial record management, acknowledges the potential of other options considered, but concurs that the Steering Group could not identify an alternative that would satisfy the Division’s requirements without going down a development route in-house. The latter would result in a stand alone system having to be established at some unknown point in the future at greater expense. The option of using Deceased on Line is considered to be the only viable solution available at this time. It is recommended therefore that Option 2 (DOL) be agreed as the hosting platform for Angus Council burial records on-line.
- 4.6 On the basis that the Council agrees to move forward with the preferred option (Deceased on Line) there will be a requirement for an additional agreement between the Council and Deceased on Line to govern the practical legal arrangements for protecting the Council copyright (re the scanned data and maps) and for the sharing of the revenues with DOL generated from this “pay per view” website. It is therefore recommended that the Council enter into this agreement.
- 4.7 Gower had estimated (Report 782/07 refers) potential income streams of between £6,000 - £22,000 per annum (to be equally shared between Gower and the Council) based on assumptions of generated web hits and ‘willingness of subscribers to pay’ – at the lower end this would result in a small surplus or break-even annually, after allowing for recurring annual costs. As a joint venture

between the Departments of Infrastructure Services and Neighbourhood Services both departments would share the costs and potential income streams.

- 4.8 DOL has advised that since its marketing activity commenced in February 2009, the hits on the site have increased by 150% and rising. New users of the site are registering on DOL at a rate of 400 registrations per month, with “paid hits” currently at 600 per month. This is based on 5 local authorities signed up at March 2009. By the end of 2009 over 20 local authorities (with at least 3 in Scotland) covering 5 million records are scheduled to be on the site. DOL has also estimated on their contacts to date that over 50 local authorities (with 20 million records) will be on the site by 2010 – and the company has a strategic objective to grow to 200 local authorities and 90 million records within 5 years. On the basis of “paid hits” conversion, DOL is projecting revenue from the site at £100,000 per month by end 2010. The Angus records exposure through this portal will be greatly increased, compared with a stand alone site. Clearly this is based on projections which have still to be tested in the market and therefore not being relied upon to estimate future income at this stage.
- 4.9 The pricing structure (www.deceasedonline.com) currently on special offer for on-line users is outlined in Appendix 2 to this Report and is seen to be realistic and competitive. The company is currently running the special offer on reduced prices as a marketing incentive for subscribers to try out the site.

5 PROJECT & MEDIA LAUNCH

- 5.1 When the burial records and associated cemetery maps are ready to go live on-line a media launch/event will be arranged in due course to get maximum publicity for the Angus Burials On-line Project. It is estimated that the project will be launched in July or August when every opportunity will be taken to promote the 2009 Roots Festival which in turn has been organised as part of the promotion of the Ancestral Tourism initiative

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Provision was made (Report 782/07 refers) for capital expenditure on the project within a range of £87,000 - £114,000 depending on the actual scanning and indexing costs together with digital mapping work. Further to the Committee approval a contract was issued in January 2008 with costings for each element of the project – as shown in Appendix 4 to this report. The range of total cost was refined to £96,047 to £99,147 allowing variations for the indexing, map digitisation, web interface customisation and search payment online. If approved utilising Deceased on Line as the hosting option the project will produce a further saving of up to £5,000 reduction of one off costs shown in Option 2 compared with Option 1 (see paragraph 4.4 above).
- 6.2 The projected outturn at 31 March 2009 has been estimated at £80,836 with a sum of £17,000 carried forward for completion of the project (mainly mapping of the remaining small cemeteries across Angus). At present therefore the projected capital cost at completion of the project is estimated at £97,836 (less a saving of up to £5k for the DOL web hosting option) which is at the lower end of the contract price provisions. (see Appendix 4 to this report)
- 6.3 A further agreement between Angus Council and Deceased Online Ltd will be required – with schedules that will govern legal aspects of copyright protection for the Council’s assets, ongoing management, maintenance and web hosting costs

as well as the 50/50 sharing of revenue income streams. This agreement will be time limited (to give a break and allow a review of performance of the site).

- 6.4 Annual revenue costs are anticipated to be in the order of £3000 shared equally between Infrastructure Services and Neighbourhood Services departments. It is anticipated however that these costs will be fully offset by income generated by paying visitors to the web site

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

8 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

9 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 9.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.
- growth in Tourism in Angus is achieved

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Law & Administration and Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The completion and launch of the Angus Burial Records on-line will provide a unique resource for the ancestral tourism initiative with appeal to ancestry resources in Scotland and overseas (Scots Diaspora), family historians and professional genealogists – particularly as a significant Angus contribution to Scotland's Year of Homecoming 2009. The optimum on-line solution for hosting the Angus burial records is provided by www.deceasedonline.com

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NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

ECDEV/DV/SMW/FM
01/04/2009

APPENDIX 1

BACKGROUND TO PROGRESS ON THE PROJECT

1. Committee Report 539/07 (June 2007) – as part of the Ancestral Tourism initiative, this report first mentioned that there was an on-going investigation of potential benefits & costs of digitising the Angus Burial Records to enhance the content of www.tayroots.com – this was a new web site about to be launched at the time.
2. Committee Report 782/07 (August 2007) – following the scoping out of the burial records project via an officer group involving Economic Development, Neighbourhood Services, Finance and IT together with the Council's existing software supplier (Gower), Report 782/07 was approved on 28 August 2007. At that point it was envisaged in the report (para 4.4) *that an optimum web hosting solution with e-commerce payment system would be negotiated via a contract with Gower.*
3. The Committee agreed to:
 - authorise the commission of the contract within a range of £87,000 - £114,000 including the costs of putting the records on-line.
 - note the potential income generation estimates provided by Gower (Appendix 2 to Report 782/07)
 - delegate the Head of Economic Development in consultation with the Head of Law & Administration to negotiate a detailed contract with the preferred supplier (Gower)
 - exempt the contract from normal tendering arrangements

It should be noted that the Report 782/07 indicated in para 4.4 that “**should it be required to be hosted on the Council's systems then IT and Finance Divisions will be fully involved in determining the specification and software implementation to ensure compatibility of any interfaces with Council financial systems**”

4. Contract with Gower : Following approval of Report 782/07, detailed negotiations commenced with Gower, the preferred supplier, and a contract was drawn up, authorised and issued by Law & Administration on 3 January 2008. The contract required Gower to:
 - digitise the 72 cemetery locations (plus associated 152 extensions) giving 224 section maps
 - produce an index of the scanned entries in the registers
 - uploading of the scans and the index
 - auto-link the lairs in maps with lair database (Gower's Epilog software system)
 - create suitable deceased search software
 - provide web interface customisation services
 - provide deceased search payment on-line services
 - the contract also fine tuned the original cost range (in Report 782/07) to a range of £96047 - £99147.

Gower then commenced the contract and there were various meetings to monitor progress by the project steering group with the involvement of IT and Finance as required.

WEB HOSTING OF ANGUS BURIAL RECORDS ON-LINE:

5. During the preparation of Report 782/07 it had been envisaged that the web based solution would be on a Council website i.e. www.tayroots.com . However in the time period between Committee approval (August 2007) and issue of the contract (January 2008) the project steering group was made aware by Gower (the contractor) of the imminent availability of a complete and unique web based solution to be branded as “Deceased on Line”
6. Therefore in concluding the contract it was considered beneficial (in potential cost savings to the Council) to allow for alternative web based scenarios to be pursued. The contract therefore did not specifically indicate www.tayroots.com as the on-line host - albeit that Gower’s software tools would be used because of the Gower software platform already used by the Council.
7. By July 2008 Gower had established its own complete software solution on-line branded as “Deceased on Line” and this was launched at Tunbridge Wells using the latter’s data. Since Gower was required to provide similar services for the Angus contract, Gower appraised the project steering group of this turnkey solution as a possible option for putting the Angus records on-line.
8. Given this new scenario, the project steering group in Sept/Oct 2008 looked again at the various options available for a web based solution.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL (HOSTING)

(considered by the project steering group during Sept / Oct 2008)

Given that the digitisation project was progressing (from contract issue in January 2008) the Steering Group was mainly engaged with the practical aspects of Phase 1 – the digitisation and mapping. However the group also considered the (potentially) available options for hosting the Council’s data and cemetery maps using Gower software as specified in the Gower Contract.

Option 1: www.tayroots.com (This is an “in-house” option as originally envisaged by Economic Development Division for the project)

The existing contract with Gower includes £11,000 to £14,000 (as part of the capital budget) that could provide this site with Gower’s deceased search software, customisation of a web interface and deceased search payment facilities on-line.

Advantages:

- once the site is customised and operational, all revenues generated by the burial records on-line would be retained by the Council
- the availability of the burial records on this site would drive additional web traffic to this site – subject to effective marketing campaigns
- the site could have high resolution images and mapping – subject to server capacity

Disadvantages:

There are two main disadvantages –

- 1) The customisation of www.tayroots.com to include an effective burial records ‘micro site’ would involve substantial additional costs to the Council – over and above the £11,000 to £14,000 provision made in the Gower contract.

Reasons:

- At the time of committee approval of the project, www.tayroots.com was a simple, stand alone web site which Gower could have easily have customised

- However at a later date a 'content management system' (CMS) already used on angusahead.com and other sites operated by Economic Development, was also implemented on www.tayroots.com to create a common software environment.
 - This CMS while giving better functionality, is provided as part of an on-going contract with another external contractor / supplier. The Council's IT Division is not involved with any of these sites.
 - Any structural changes to these sites requires the involvement of this external contractor at additional cost – for example a recent quotation for adding a fully fledged micro site to angusahead.com was £34,000
 - In this context therefore the addition of a burial records micro site on www.tayroots.com would incur substantial additional costs (over and above Gower's £11k to £14k) arising from the requirement to involve the CMS contractor – plus additional costs anytime the site had to be changed in the future.
- 2) Since www.tayroots.com (as a stand alone single local authority web site) would only (for the foreseeable future) host the Angus burial records, it would not benefit from the national marketing exposure and higher level of web traffic normally generated by a growing national portal site such as Deceased on Line – which would impact on potential revenue generation from the project.

Option 2: www.deceasedonline.com - by the summer 2008, Gower and partners had implemented a unique and comprehensive software/ web solution on a new web portal branded as " Deceased on Line" and this was launched with burial records from its first client being Tunbridge Wells. Gower then invited the Steering Group to consider using this already proven web based solution for hosting Angus Council records, that included data & mapping together with auto updating for new burials as they occur.

Advantages:

- Ready made, tried and tested software solution. Gower agreed to put Angus data and maps on the site for demonstration purposes and accuracy testing by the Project Steering Group. The web site in practice operated very effectively which bodes well for an immediate and cost effective solution for the Council.
- Many English Local Authorities and Scottish Local Authorities have come on board with this company so there is momentum for the ongoing development of this site to become (de facto) the national portal for burial records.
- Gower would operate the site and share revenues generated with each Council, with respect to their own records. Angus Council would contribute to the annual maintenance/web hosting via an additional agreement with the company – at circa £3,000 p.a.
- Angus Council could for its part, place links on all of its sites to this Portal and encourage other genealogy/ancestral sites and agencies (including VisitScotland) to link to this portal.
- Gower had estimated (Report 782/07 refers) potential income streams of between £6,000 - £22,000 per annum (to be equally shared between Gower and the Council) based an assumptions of generated web hits and 'willingness of subscribers to pay' – at the lower end this would result in a small surplus or break-even. As a joint venture between the Departments of Infrastructure Services and Neighbourhood Services both departments would share the costs and potential income streams. This of course has yet to be tested in the market.
- The current pricing structure (www.deceasedonline.com) for on-line users is outlined in Appendix 2 to this Report and is seen to be realistic and competitive. The company is currently running an offer on reduced prices as a marketing incentive for subscribers to try out the site.

- DOL provides high resolution burial record images and digital maps via ample server capacity (no current bandwidth issue)
- There is a cost saving of up to £5400 on the initial contract with Gower
- There is a saving on the additional expenditure that the Council would have to incur for external CMS IT support and separate marketing costs that would be required on a Council stand alone site

Disadvantages

- Sharing revenue with Deceased on Line – although this is offset by cost savings to the Council
- The level of future dependency (by the Council) must be addressed

Option 3: www.scotlandspeople.com (a new option raised by Cultural Services as a potential alternative).

It was initially thought that the use of this site had some advantages because as Scotland's national site for births, deaths, marriages and wills and other archival content, it is an important Portal attracting millions of customers world wide.

However there is a major disadvantage with this portal because it does not feature any of Scotland's burial records (since all are held locally by local authorities) - and obviously therefore, does not need to have any functionality for digital mapping of cemeteries.

Value for Money

A value for money assessment has been included in the main body of the report.

Conclusions:

Of the three options looked at by the Steering Group:

- 1) www.tayroots.com is no longer seen as a solution of choice having unforeseen additional costs for implementation, the need for ongoing IT support and the need for higher level marketing activity.
- 2) www.deceasedonline.com - It is considered that the advantages of Deceased on Line outweigh the benefits (and has minimal disadvantages) compared to a stand alone solution on the Council site.
- 3) should www.scotlandspeople.com seek in the future to include burial records on its site in a comprehensive fashion (i.e. all local authority burials), introduced digital mapping capability, and was willing to share revenues generated on its site with local authorities – then this option could be considered in future – but is not an option at present and was therefore discounted

APPENDIX 2

'DECEASED ON LINE' – PRICING STRUCTURE ** (FEBRUARY 2009)

	Credits	Effective Price
Burial Register scan*	15	£1.50
Cremation Register scan*	15	£1.50
Full Burial Register entry*	15	£1.50
Image of a grave memorial	20	£2.00
Maps showing a grave or memorial location	50	£5.00

Notes

1. If both a scan and full register entry appear against a record, then the subscriber is only charged once.
2. As an example, a customer requesting a scan and/or register (£1.50), an image of a grave memorial (£2.00) and a digitalised map location (£5.00) would be charged a total of £8.50.
3. 'Deceased on Line' are continually reviewing the pricing strategy to achieve a reasonable return at a cost effective price to the consumer.
4. **Pricing shows current special offer on the site at present

APPENDIX 3

BURIAL RECORDS DIGITISATION PROJECT (CAPITAL)

PROJECTED OUTTURN BY 31 MARCH 2009

ALREADY INVOICED / PAID

SCANNING SERVICES (Burial & Lair Records)	15046.55	
SCANNING SERVICES (Cemetery Maps)	3490.00	
INDEXING OF REGISTERS (part)	5000.00	
TOTAL	23536.55	<i>Paid</i>

TO BE INVOICED	To be billed by 31 March 09	Balance carried forward 2009/10
INDEXING OF REGISTERS (continued)	40000.00	9000.00
MAP DIGITISATION	6000.00	3600.00
MAP LINKING	1300.00	0.00
WEB SOFTWARE/ HOSTING (one off cost)	10000.00	4400.00
TOTAL to be invoiced	57300.00	17000.00

Notes

1. The projected Outturn by 31 March 2009 is £80,836.55
2. Report 782/07 gave a projected budget range of £87,000 - £114,000
3. The projected Outturn for the project is estimated at a maximum of £95,836.55

Appendix 4

Burial Digitisation Project: Cost Variations

1. Further to Report 782/07 Committee approval for capital expenditure within a range of £87,000 - £114,000, a contract was issued in January 2008 with more refined costs, but allowing for variations for indexing, map digitisation etc, as set out in the contract. Table A below refers:

Table A	Prices £
Scanning Registers	15,046.55
Indexing Records	54,000.00
Mapping (cemeteries)	14,400.00
Map Linking IT Index	1,300.00
Search Software	6,750.00
Web interface	2,600.00 to 3,900.00
Deceased Payment On-Line	1,950.00 to 3,750.00
TOTAL	96,046.55 to 99,146.55

2. The most uncertain, time consuming and costly part of the project relates to the 'manual' indexing – in the above table "Indexing Records" allowed for variation in the contract up to a maximum of £54,000. The contractor had indicated from the outset, that the indexing cost would be at the high end. In terms of the work carried out the contractor has indicated that there were considerable unforeseen difficulties with the project for the following reasons (summarised)

- Inconsistencies in the burial registers particularly with historic recording of lair references – this took considerable additional time and work (which has in fact extended the project completion by over 6 months).

The Director of Neighbourhood Services has confirmed that, prior to the mid 1990's, all the burghs of Angus had their own methods of recording/lair referencing methods that the contractor would have to resolve in practice.

- Illegibility, particularly of deceased names and lair references that required 100% visual checking of over 200,000 records and resolution of anomalies.
- Inconsistency of layouts between cemeteries and within cemeteries across the various registers through time – big issue given the large number of cemeteries – this is why the project is still not complete.
- On the smaller cemeteries with greater data complexity (and smaller volumes) work had to be done in the UK by specialists under supervision – the main indexing work had been done overseas.

- The contractor considers that the true cost (for indexing) to the contractor has been closer to £65,000 instead of the maximum of £54,000 specified in the contract. In addition the contractor has voluntarily (at no charge to the Council) captured additional information i.e. cremated remains and age/stillborn together with data uploading work to the Council's Epilog system.