



# A Guide to Sustainable Change in the Death Care Sector

OpusXenta™

# Contents

03	Introduction
04	Market Analysis
06	Sustainability Audit
07	Stage One: Practical Changes
10	Spotlight on: Environmental Policy in Practice
11	Stage Two: Tactical Changes
13	Spotlight on: Digital Mapping at Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries
14	Stage Three: Strategic Changes
17	Spotlight on: The CDS Group
18	Green Pioneers: A Spotlight on GreenAcres

# It's time for sustainable change in the death care sector

Medical advancements and better living standards have contributed to people living much longer, but with around 1% of the populace dying each year, for many years, the death care sector along with most of society has been unknowingly contributing to Global Warming and Climate Change. But times have changed and there is now greater awareness with regards to the role the death care sector is playing in the escalating environmental emergency.

New information has emerged about the toxicity of materials involved in body disposal, from the ecological effects of embalming fluids and coffins, through to the effects of natural body composition and even the release of mercury from tooth fillings. What is clear is that the sector as a whole is facing a significant challenge when it comes to addressing and reversing its contribution to the Climate Crisis.

The pressure to implement change is no longer coming from the smaller, eco-conscious subsections of the community alone. In February 2021, it was reported that 335 out of a total of 404 District, County, Unitary and Metropolitan Councils had declared a Climate Emergency. This included eight combined Authorities and City Regions. As part of the declaration, aggressive time lines and plans are now being put into place to address all of the areas under their control, including death care services. Time is of the essence too, with the vast majority of these plans set to be implemented by 2030.

Despite providing much-needed and valued services to the communities they operate in, the death care sector's impact on the environment continues to be damaging and unsustainable. Many death care professionals think that it is impossible to avoid the negative impacts on the environment completely, regardless of whether customers are opting for burials or cremations.

Whilst the challenges in this sector are plentiful in regards to sustainability, there are many steps, both large and small, that Funeral Directors, Crematoria and Cemeteries can take to help limit their impact on the environment.

Broadly speaking, these fall into four key categories; pollution reduction, preserving ecological habitats, recycling and energy consumption. By taking practical steps to fully assess the operation, identifying areas for improvement and actively seeking out solutions that benefit the environment, bereavement service professionals can ensure that the future death care sector delivers far more than it takes away.

This guide has been created by the team at OpusXenta to help death care professionals better understand the steps they can take to start immediately reducing the environmental impact of their operations. Drawing on documented examples of published environmental approaches alongside case studies from GreenAcres and Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries (NMC), the guide explores the short, medium and long term considerations which are necessary to transition towards a more sustainable operation.

Ultimately, the most fundamental shift needs to be changes in mindset, outlook and company culture. It is only by changing perspective and considering the environmental impact of all activities undertaken that the sector can truly start to make progress. The time is ticking and there is no better time to start than now.

**Scott Storey**

Head of European Operations, OpusXenta



## Consumer behaviour

- In the UK, **over 78% of people** are now choosing cremation over a traditional burial.
- There are still over **130,000 in the UK** each year who still choose to have a burial
- **SunLife** reports a 'five-fold' increase in direct cremations, making up around 14% of all funerals in 2020, up from 3% in 2019
- **2021 Foresight Consumer Behavior Study**, 32% of consumers either have a different attitude towards the funeral and cemetery profession or their expectations for memorialization have changed as a result of the pandemic.
- The Telegraph reported **an 80% decline** in requests for religious funerals,



## Costs

- Research by **SunLife** in 2020 revealed that funeral costs had risen in some regions by as much as 9% in a year, bringing the average funeral cost to £4,400
- The same report suggested that with additions such as professional services and flowers, the cost of dying was now just short of £10,000
- Basic cremation fees make up **over 90% of revenues** for UK crematoria
- A 2013 survey **indicated nearly half** of England's cemeteries could run out of space within the next 20 years, with prices for a single burial plot costing as much as £19,940 (\$26,449).



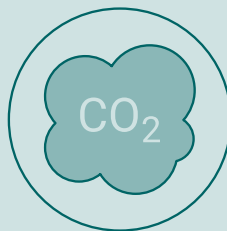
## Climate Emergency

- The **IPCC's U.N report** delivered its starkest warning on climate change yet, calling it a 'code red for humanity'. In the report, the panel warned that limiting global warming levels to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels will be 'beyond reach' within the next 20 years unless immediate and wide-spread actions are taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- In Feb 2021, it was reported that **335 out of a total of 404** District, County, Unitary and Metropolitan Councils had so far declared a Climate Emergency. This includes 8 combined Authorities and City Regions



## Emissions

- U.S. cremations **contribute around 1.7 billion pounds of carbon dioxide** into the atmosphere each year.
- Whilst cremations are considered to be less damaging to the environment than burials, they still release a plethora of dangerous chemicals into the atmosphere, including carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals and mercury emissions.
- A single cremation generates NOx (greenhouse gas) emissions equivalent to a car travelling 2,280 miles.
- Burials are also problematic, due to toxic chemicals which leach into the soil and have been detected in groundwater around cemeteries, posing a risk to public health.
- Over **800,000 gallons of Formaldehyde** are put into the ground along with dead bodies every year in the U.S.
- 30 million board feet of hardwood, 2,700 tons of copper and bronze, 104,272 tons of steel, and 1,636,000 tons of reinforced concrete are used in US burials every year
- The casket wood equates to 4 million acres of forest, and could build around 4.5 million homes.



## Technology

- Research conducted by **9Dot Research** revealing that at least 40% of UK funeral services involved live streaming or video, with 86% of guests who were not able to attend believing that this was a good idea.
- **50-60% of the UK's private crematoria** currently offer live-streaming facilities compared with just 30-40% by local authorities.
- The most up-to-date figures available suggest that **one in eight local authority burial grounds** have no up-to-date diagrammatic plan of burial plots.
- 50% of younger consumers would now prefer to make their arrangement virtually or by having the funeral director or counsellor visit their home.
- The 2021 Foresight Consumer Behavior Study finding that 74% of consumers expect to find prices online,
- The same study found that 47% of consumers will simply not do business with a firm if they do not provide pricing online.



# Sustainability Audit

## Find out where you are on your sustainability journey

Q1) Which definition of business sustainability most aligns with your views?

- a. Greener practices
- b. Sustainable practices across multiple areas of the business
- c. Sustainability at the core of business strategy and decision making

Q2) How important is sustainability in your current decision-making?

- a. Not very important
- b. Quite important
- c. Very important

Q3) What is your primary reason for exploring new sustainability initiatives?

- a. Because we're falling behind our competitors
- b. Because all businesses need to transition for the future
- c. Because it's integral to our future business model

Q4) Who is currently driving your sustainability initiatives?

- a. Individual employees
- b. Middle Managers
- c. CEO/Board

Q5) What is your biggest concern regarding transitioning to a more sustainable operation?

- a. Cost
- b. Implementation
- c. Strategy

Q6) What aspect of business sustainability do you most need to focus on right now?

- a. In-house practices
- b. Culture and people
- c. Infrastructure

### Mostly A's

#### Sustainability Starter

You are new to the sustainability journey and are keen to explore ways in which your organisation can start to make an immediate impact. You are likely to benefit most from Stage 1 of this guide, which will provide some useful hints and tips for changes that you can implement within the next 6 months.

### Mostly B's

#### Sustainability Senior

You have been invested in sustainability goals for a little while now and have made a number of positive practical changes to your business. Whilst this is great news for your business, you recognise the need to take this one step further, and start to embed your sustainability practices in your relationships with employees, customers and suppliers. You are most likely to benefit from Stage 2 of this guide, which explores all of these critical business components in more detail.

### Mostly C's

#### Sustainability Superstar

You are well on the way to transitioning your business towards a sustainable future and are ready to take the long view, exploring what changes need to be made in the next 1-5 years. You are most likely to benefit from Stage 3 of this guide, which addresses the key infrastructure, design and investment decisions. These critical decisions will shape the direction of your business and ensure it is ready to meet the needs of future society.

The background of the slide features a close-up, artistic photograph of several long, green leaves, possibly from a plant like a peace lily. The leaves are oriented vertically and are bathed in a soft, diffused light that creates a range of green tones, from deep forest green to a lighter, almost lime green where the light hits. The texture of the leaves appears smooth but with some natural veining visible. Overlaid on this background is white text in a clean, sans-serif font.

Stage one:  
Practical Changes  
(0-6 months)

So, you're ready to start making changes to your organisation, but as you research the topic further, it is common to start feeling overwhelmed. The options, the timescales, the costs, and the sheer amount of work to be done can stop even the most committed in their tracks and can prevent progress from being made.

The good news is that there are a number of small but impactful steps which can be taken now to start the ball rolling and immediately lessen your negative impact on the environment.

## 10 practical steps include:

### 1. Implement an environmental policy

It's fundamental that your company culture has an environmental policy at its core. An environmental policy is a statement communicating your policy to those within the organisation as well as to customers, suppliers and any other stakeholders. Signed by a senior executive to ensure it is considered 'Company Policy', it is a formal commitment by a company that recognises its impact on the environment and is taking steps towards making positive and permanent changes.

Many organisations (two of which have been outlined below) are now starting to include environmental policies at the core of their business decision-making.

- The National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD): The NAFD, which represents the entire spectrum of funeral directing businesses, is committed to environmental best practice. The NAFD focuses on a few key areas including the procurement of goods including the selection of materials, suppliers and services; the minimisation of general waste; raising environmental awareness among staff, members, stakeholders and suppliers; and efficient use of transportation and energy.
- Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA): The FBCA and stakeholders from the UK's cremation and funeral sector are dedicated to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cremations, continually looking for more environmentally-friendly alternatives.

A free sample environmental policy template can be found at [www.environmentalpolicy.org.uk](http://www.environmentalpolicy.org.uk)

### 2. Rainwater harvesting

Changes to our climate and future weather patterns indicate that the UK and mainland Europe can expect to experience longer, warmer, drier summers and warmer and wetter winters. Climate change predictions highlight the need to manage our water usage more efficiently to minimise the effects of these changes on our daily lives. Rainwater harvesting reduces water bills, demand on supply, reduces flooding, and soil erosion.

It's easy to install and quick to start collecting water, but there are a few options to consider. There is a handy guide to getting started at [urban-water.co.uk/rainwater-harvesting/](http://urban-water.co.uk/rainwater-harvesting/)

### 3. Collect and sort plastic from floral tributes for recycling

Floral tributes are routinely sent to landfill as waste, but there are alternative options. Recycling old floral tributes means that the green waste can be composted and used to enhance growing conditions in flower beds and borders. Sorting the plastic also means that it can be reused and recycled, avoiding the need to be sent to landfill. There are many florists who now seek to reduce or completely eliminate plastic from their floral arrangements, so it is worth speaking to your regular floral suppliers to find out whether they are making the transition to plastic free.



#### 4. Introduce solar powered lighting for outdoor areas

Keeping outdoor areas well lit in the evenings provides practical, safety and aesthetic benefits, but also causes excessive wastage of precious energy resources, not to mention higher bills. Outdoor solar powered lighting is not only easy to install, but is also cost-effective and environmentally-friendly, providing all of the benefits, without the disadvantages. The type of lights will depend on the location and usage requirement, so we recommended seeking expert advice and shopping around to find the best solution for your specific needs.

#### 5. Implement 'motion sensor' lighting in low traffic areas

For areas where traffic is infrequent, motion sensor lighting can be an effective way to cut down energy wastage and save money too. From bathrooms to hallways and even stock rooms, a quick audit of your building will identify areas that could benefit from motion sensor lights. They can also be installed outside too, meaning that energy is only consumed when it is needed.

#### 6. Switch to a renewable energy provider

If you're not already with a renewable energy provider then now is the perfect time to make the switch. By simply opting for a green energy provider, you will be really making positive environmental changes.

You can access independent information on switching your business energy provider at [www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-businesses/switching-your-business-new-energy-tariff-or-supplier](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-businesses/switching-your-business-new-energy-tariff-or-supplier)

#### 7. Create a composting area for disposal of flowers

Composting is an environmentally-friendly and practical way of disposing of old flowers. By creating a new composting area, you can help to shift behaviours towards recycling rather than disposing of old flowers. This is something which you can

communicate to your employees, customers and suppliers, and you can even install posters or information on your website to advise people of this environmentally friendly offering.

#### 8. Create a dedicated area for wildlife and natural habitat growth

Whilst space might be limited, there is always somewhere on the grounds which could be designed for wildlife and natural habitat growth. Encouraging wildlife to flourish is not only good for the environment, but will be welcomed by visitors too. It will also help to cultivate vegetation specific to the region.

#### 9. Switch to more environmentally friendly maintenance equipment

Did you know, in the US, 5% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions are from the use of lawn mowers? The maintenance of gardens is often an important consideration for burial grounds and crematoria, people expect the area to be well kept and looked after as a mark of respect to those that rest there. Maintenance equipment such as lawn mowers have traditionally had a significant impact on the environment due to their emissions, but greener options are now more readily available. Consider sourcing more eco-friendly equipment and start putting your old machines out to pasture. It could make a noticeable difference to the carbon footprint of your business.

#### 10. Provide information to the public on the eco-choices available when planning a funeral for a loved one

There are many eco-friendly options available across all aspects of the funeral planning process, but many are simply not aware of them. Death care providers can all play their part by helping to educate families on greener options which may fit in with the preferences of their loved ones, or better match the values of those organising the funeral. Information can be quickly added to your website, with posters or leaflets available on site for extra visibility (using eco-friendly ink and paper of course!)

# Spotlight on: Environmental Policy in Practice

There are a number of published examples of environmental policy in practice from across the sector. One such example is Funeral Partners, the UK's third largest funeral provider, with over 200 funeral homes in their network. As part of their values, Funeral Partners recognise they have an environmental impact and therefore are committed to monitoring, understanding and reducing their carbon footprint. Proving to have an environmental policy at their core, outlined below are some examples of how Funeral Partners have taken steps to reduce their environmental impact.

**Energy sources:** Their electricity supplier sources 23% of their electricity from renewable sources.

**Fleet and fuel:** They have a procurement policy in place whereby any new hearse and limousine purchases are always hybrid. Not only that, but their fleet of vehicles for general use are now selected for their reduced emissions and they no longer purchase diesel vehicles for general purpose. In order to optimise fuel usage, their private ambulances are speed-restricted and they also coincide deliveries of products with the removal of other products.

**Principal coffin supply:** Their coffin supplier has been accredited with the ISO 14001 standard, which is an internationally recognised mark for the environmental management of businesses. Funeral Partners also offer a 'Greener Goodbyes' service through their supplier which provides the option of carrying out three simple steps for those wishing to make their funeral more ethically conscious. This includes options to offset carbon emissions, for example, and purchase trees for planting.

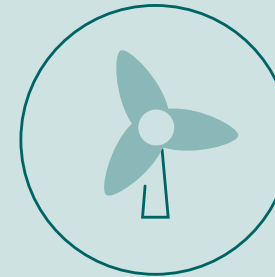
**Principal funeral stationery supply:** Their principal supplier of funeral stationery is ISO 14001 certified, and the paper for the products they offer to their clients through this supplier is either Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) certified or certified by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

**Waste:** They ensure that all of their confidential waste is recycled and they have strict controls in place to comply with their legal obligations when it comes to the disposal of clinical waste.

**Clothing:** Their uniform supplier is ISO 14001 accredited in Environmental Management and its supply chain monitoring procedures rely upon the Base Code of the Ethical Trading Initiative. Their supplier is a member of Sedex Global, a not for profit membership organisation dedicated to driving improvements in ethical and responsible business practices in global supply chains.

When operating day-to-day, Funeral Partners is conscious to ensure everything (as feasibly possible) ticks the environmentally-friendly box.

\*Information sourced from the Funeral Partners website: [corporate.funeralpartners.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility/](https://corporate.funeralpartners.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility/)

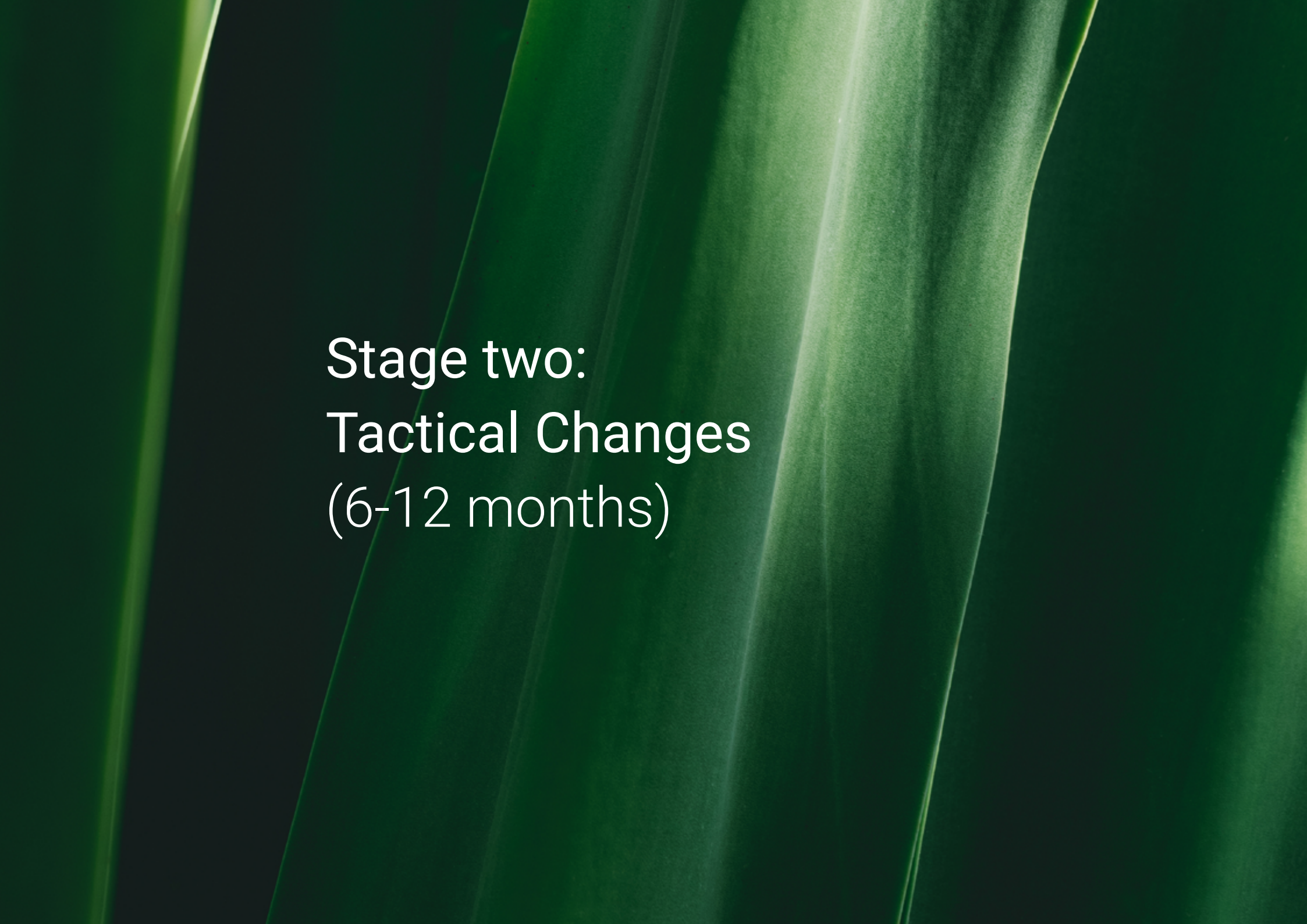


**23%**  
electricity from sources  
**RENEWABLE**

**'Greener Goodbyes'**  
which includes carbon offsetting via  
**tree planting**



all confidential  
**WASTE**  
recycled

The background of the slide is a dark green color with several bright, diagonal light green lines that create a sense of movement and depth. The lines are slightly curved and vary in brightness, giving the background a textured, almost organic feel.

## Stage two: Tactical Changes (6-12 months)

Having made a number of practical changes now is time to start looking more deeply into the tactical changes that are needed to drive your organisation towards your sustainability goals.

Here are some essential considerations that can be typically implemented within a 6-12 month period.

## Six essential considerations include:

### 1. Supplier contracts and relationships

As contracts expire and face renewal, it is the perfect opportunity to review your current arrangements to ensure that your suppliers or contractors are also mindful of their sustainability obligations. Refer back to your Environmental Company Policy and also consider whether providers are aligned with your company's vision, values and objectives for the future. Placing sustainability at the core of your supplier decision-making can help to ensure that you are not only making positive progress within your organisation itself but within its supply chain too.

### 2. Cemetery Mapping

Traditionally, cemetery layouts and inventory have been recorded using land surveying techniques, which are costly in terms of time and expense. This also means that the maps are usually only updated every few years and so become outdated very quickly. Traditional maps also tend to only provide a rough indication of where someone was buried.

Cemeteries often struggle with a lack of visibility when it comes to assessing their available space. As the population continues to grow exponentially, there is greater pressure on burial grounds to find space to accommodate new burials. This is a common and ever-present issue that can be effectively minimized by implementing digital mapping, which provides a far more accurate representation of space utilisation. Digital cemetery mapping has replaced generalisation with precision; it has made it possible to obtain high-quality, detailed images of a burial ground in just a few weeks. For those operations looking to become more sustainable, a crystal clear view of exactly what capacity is available is an essential requirement for effective decision making..

You can try the byondcloud MapMakr tool for free. For more information visit - [www.opusxenta.com/features/mapping](http://www.opusxenta.com/features/mapping)

### 3. Digitisation of Records

Records are at the heart of every cemetery and not only provide an invaluable window into the past but are critical to planning and managing its future. In an increasingly tech-driven world, digitisation provides the opportunity for death care providers to reach wider audiences whilst also reducing paper waste and for many, eliminating the need for physical visits.

These documents are often stored locally at the cemeteries, parishes, or town halls where there is the ever-present risk of fire or water damage. Increasingly turbulent weather systems mean that flooding is becoming a growing concern for cemeteries; **Nottingham Road Cemetery** is just one of many which experienced severe flooding twice in one week in January 2021, following heavy rainfall. It is simply not possible to completely guarantee the safety and preservation of physical records, making the switch to digital records an essential consideration.

A free trial of RecordKeepr is available to help get you started. Find out more at [www.opusxenta.com/products/recordkeepr](http://www.opusxenta.com/products/recordkeepr)

### 4. Team Training

Changing behaviours and cultures within an organisation can take time, so embarking on a schedule of team training will help to educate your staff on how the business is transitioning to a more sustainable operation. This will provide the opportunity to address any questions or concerns and gain valuable feedback from everyone involved in making the transition a success.

There are a number of free or low-cost courses available, including a free 10-week course, '**Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Environmental Sustainability**' provided by the Basingstoke College of Technology. Many others are also available.

### 5. Consultancy

Making the transition to sustainability can be a daunting one and there are likely to be many questions that arise during the exploration process. You should not expect to know all of the answers, so it might be worth enlisting the help of a specialist consultant or advisor, who can help guide you and map out the route to success.

### 6. Website design

Your website is your shop window to the world, so it is essential that this effectively represents your vision, values, and approaches. As you identify new services, changes to processes and start achieving milestone successes, it will be essential that your website is updated to reflect the transition being made on the ground. Enlisting the help of a web designer will ensure that any new practical functions can be added without compromising on the visual appeal or searchability of your site.

# Spotlight on: Digital Mapping at Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries

James Meyrick, Chief Information Officer (CIO) for **Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries (NMC)**, is passionate about implementing innovative technology solutions to create excellent customer experiences across their five cemeteries in New South Wales (NSW). For NMC, James tells us that digital mapping has gone from a 'nice to have' feature to an essential cemetery capability in a little over five years.

In the past, NMC relied on hand crafted cemetery maps, which employees would manually search. However, the implementation of digital mapping has changed the way they work and how visitors engage with the cemetery.

Many people have been stuck at home with plenty of spare time to conduct genealogy and family history research during the pandemic. As a result, the number of enquiries from people wanting to locate the resting place of a loved one increased by 150%.

Mapping forms the basis of NMC's deceased search, allowing them to direct the public to the location of a grave through their website. Working with the OpusXenta team, this was expanded a few years ago to include SMS communication and integration with GPS Google maps. Visitors to the cemetery can now plan their journey to the cemetery and grave before leaving the house.

The maps also proved useful when everyone was required to maintain social distancing, and NMC employees had to limit face-to-face contact with families wanting to purchase a grave or memorial location. Using the digital maps, they were able to direct family members to inspect their desired location at a time convenient for them and then process the paperwork digitally - keeping both employees and families safe.

With the introduction of drones to take aerial photographs, cemetery maps can be even more detailed. Plot locations can be attached to a GPS coordinate, creating an overlay for something referenceable like Google Maps.

Drone mapping was completed at NMC in 2020, and there are plans to revisit the activity every 6-12 months. "NMC locations are growing at an ever-increasing rate as we build new facilities and open new areas for memorialisation. Google Maps does not update frequently, and that leads to inaccurate data and confuses staff and visitors," says James.

Drone imagery keeps pace with cemetery development, provides better resolution and captures more accurate details. Family support teams at NMC can now pull a snapshot of the area and see each grave's status in real-time.

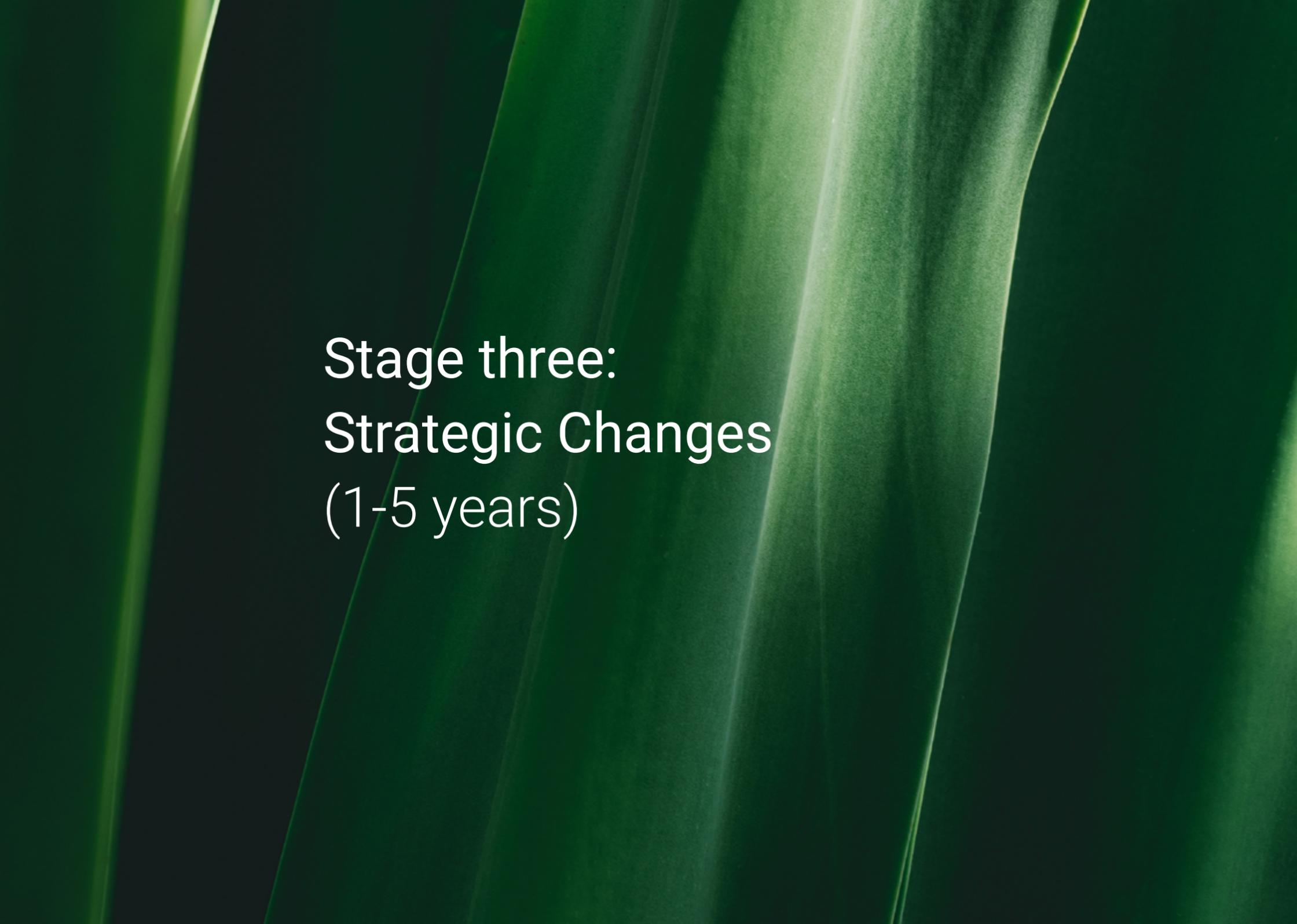
With physical distancing and restrictions in place due to COVID-19 many events, including tours, were delivered online. **Virtual tour maps** were constructed for areas within their cemeteries, and demand was high during COVID. James told us that "NMC are always looking into how technology can assist the communities they serve".

With the explosion in popularity of genealogy and family history research, people are contacting the cemetery in droves, looking for information about family members and ancestors. Digital mapping helps NMC employees provide detailed and accurate information quickly and easily rather than looking through manual records and registers. James is excited to trial MapMakr and sees the value it could add to NMC. The benefits of digital mapping are clear, providing NMC with a sustainable way to increase the level of customer service, and set the right expectations for the future.

The number of enquiries from people wanting to locate the resting place of a loved one increased by 150% as people had plenty of spare time to research their family history during the pandemic

Google Maps doesn't update frequently enough, leading to inaccurate data. Drone imagery keeps pace with cemetery development, provides better resolution and captures more accurate details.

The benefits of digital mapping are clear, providing a sustainable way to access detailed information, increase the level of customer service and set the right expectations for the future.



Stage three:  
Strategic Changes  
(1-5 years)

After addressing the practical and tactical changes, now is the time for big sky thinking. A thorough assessment and review of your organisation, how it operates and how it's performing needs to take place. To really ensure your business is sustainable in the future, it's vital that you're constantly adapting in an environmentally-friendly way, so that your operation is fit for the future.

Included below are key considerations for the next 1-5 years.

## 1. Environmentally-friendly building design

To ensure your business is operating in the most eco-friendly way, it's important to look at the engineering and design of your building to ensure you're preventing pollution, conserving energy and limiting any damaging impact on the environment. Adaptations to your current building could range from the installation of solar panels, to the procurement of sustainable furniture. Any new builds should be designed with sustainability in mind. Examples include the use of low-carbon cement in construction work, reclaimed timber and non-toxic, eco-friendly paint.

## 2. Replacement of traditional equipment

Each year in the UK, **79% of people** are cremated across around 300 crematoriums. 99% of the cremator machines used are gas powered and for every gas cremation, approximately 245kg of carbon is released into the atmosphere. If you add this up, around 115,150 tonnes of carbon, solely from cremation in the UK, is released each year.

Across Europe, alternative technologies and approaches to operational efficiency are being explored. Electric cremators - which are being manufactured in the Netherlands and Germany - are designed to be extremely efficient, releasing around **90% less carbon** than a conventional gas cremator.

Other eco-friendly innovations in body disposal include Aquamation (also known as water cremation or alkaline hydrolysis) and Composting, otherwise known as 'natural organic reduction', which claims to turn a corpse into two wheelbarrows worth of soil within 4-6 weeks. Despite being a relatively new entrant to the sector, interest is growing. Washington has become the first US state to legalise **human composting**, and **Recompose**, a Seattle-based company, has plans to open the world's first human composting facility next year.

Resomation Ltd is a company that is pioneering water cremation in the UK and around the world. For over 10 years, they have been developing the science behind the process and supplying state-of-the-art equipment. Formed back in 2007 in Scotland by Sandy Sullivan, Resomation Ltd promotes water cremation as a new, more environmentally-friendly alternative to burial or flame cremation.

The Faunus Group - a green initiative formulated by a collection of like-minded professionals - also specialise in eco-friendly end of life options. The Woodland Burial Company has been set up by the Faunus Group as an environmentally-friendly alternative, to provide lasting, personal and private resting places, within beautiful woodland surroundings.



### 3. Landscape and burial ground design

External landscaping plays an important role in having a positive impact on the environment. Hiring landscapers and designers could significantly improve the local habitat, biodiversity and reduce air pollution through planting schemes. It can take years for natural biodiversity to be restored, so any actions must be embedded in the long-term plans for transitioning landscaping and burial ground design to one which benefits people, animals and the planet.

This helpful article provides 17 eco-friendly landscaping ideas which could help kick-start your ground design's transition to a sustainable safe haven - [www.conserve-energy-future.com/eco-friendly-landscaping-ideas](http://www.conserve-energy-future.com/eco-friendly-landscaping-ideas)

### 4. Workforce

As the world transitions to a new, more sustainable way of operating, the skills, values and visions of the workforce in the deathcare sector are also set to change. As one of the more traditional sectors, a large proportion of the workforce are older in age, and more akin to the 'old ways' of doing things. In the coming years, the deathcare sector will need to work hard to make it's offering appealing to a new, younger workforce, who are much more vocal about their desires to work for organisations that are making a positive impact on the world.

Digitally native and ready to challenge the status quo, the new generation of deathcare professionals will be well equipped with the skills, knowledge and desire to change businesses for the better. Transforming your culture and your business so that you can attract valuable 'green talent' will be essential in ensuring that your future business continues to transition towards a secure, sustainable operation that meets the needs of future generations.

### 5. Technology

The deathcare sector has been traditionally slow to evolve from a technology standpoint, with many systems and processes relying on manual input or legacy IT systems. In order to improve efficiency, streamline costs and manage a more sustainable operation, appropriate IT systems, software and tools are required not only to meet the needs of today, but those of the decades to come.

As part of your sustainability journey, it will be necessary to conduct a full audit of your current IT provision, exploring how current solutions could be improved and what gaps need closing in order to create a seamless experience for both employees and the public. IT infrastructure can often take time to transition, but identifying compatible solutions can help ensure that the migration process is as smooth as possible.

### 6. Ethical investment

Impact investing is a growing area within asset management and one which continues to gain interest as investors look to diversify their portfolios to accommodate greener businesses.

Impact investors have sustainability at the core of their investment decisions and actively work with their businesses to ensure that positive, progressive change and accountability are present within their portfolio of companies. For an impact investor, investing is about more than the money. Figures from the Global Impact Investment Network (GIIN), suggest that 65% of investors have a vested interest in making the world a better place.

As a deathcare provider, having the support of an eco-minded investor will help to drive forward the 'big' investment decisions that are necessary to ultimately transition the deathcare sector from where it is now, to where it needs to be in a decade.

This detailed article provides more information on impact investing and how to attract the interest of an ethical investor - [startups.co.uk/sustainability/impact-investment/](http://startups.co.uk/sustainability/impact-investment/)

# Spotlight on: The CDS Group

Founded in 2003, Cemetery Development Services Ltd, or otherwise known as The CDS Group, is the UK's leading consultancy, specialising in cemetery and crematorium development, open space design and environmental solutions. Since they began, The CDS Group has undertaken over 400 feasibility studies and designed and built 40 new cemeteries, both in the UK and overseas.

After having much success and building an excellent reputation in the cemetery market, The CDS Group has expanded, working with both private companies and local authorities in designing and developing new crematoria sites. Due to increased demand, The CDS Group have numerous sites currently under construction and many others in the pipeline.

In light of the climate change crisis and depleting resources, The CDS Group is passionate at striving to reduce the environmental impact of any new development they design and build, ensuring they make use of recycled materials where possible.

Proving they are designing crematoria of the future, they have many Green Initiatives in place, including, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Recycle Plastic Drainage, Energy Efficient Building, Electric Cremators, Electric Hearses, Plastic Roads, Native Planting and Low Carbon Cement.

The CDS Group has built 40 new cemeteries and strives to reduce the environmental impact of any new development they design and build



Recycled materials are used wherever possible and a number of Green Initiatives are in place to support their design for crematoria of the future

Plastic roads, low carbon cement, sustainable drainage systems and native planting all help ensure the environmental impact of new facilities is kept as low as possible



The background is a dark green field with several bright, diagonal, ethereal light streaks or stripes that create a sense of depth and movement. A soft, circular spotlight effect is centered on the text, making it stand out from the darker surroundings.

# Green Pioneers:

## A Spotlight on GreenAcres

As demand for more eco-friendly burials continues to rise, businesses like GreenAcres are primed to thrive. Here, we explore how this organisation is taking steps to prepare for a bright and prosperous future.

GreenAcres was initiated as part of an investment by its parent company, Darwin, who recognised that there was the need for a more customer-focused approach to the bereavement and death care sector. GreenAcres provides a natural, modern alternative to the traditional funeral and on-going memorial practices, offering a range of services tailored to meet the needs of each family.

### A personalised approach

Traditionally, there have been a limited number of burial and memorial options available to the bereaved. Over 50% of the UK population do not associate with a religion, and there is a significant lack of choice when it comes to catering to different faiths, in addition to contemporary personal preferences.

All located in stunning natural environments GreenAcres has seven different sites across the country. Most of their sites offer services catering to the preferences of multiple faiths, or no faith at all, with one location specialising in serving the needs of the Muslim community.

GreenAcres really do put their customers at the forefront of their operation. They recognise the importance of giving families time for their service. Funeral services are not rushed, and guests are given plenty of time to spend with their loved ones. This is a refreshing difference to many burial and memorial services that can feel pressured and held in haste. GreenAcres aims to provide services that truly reflect the wishes of families, and the team goes above and beyond to do that. Prioritising ongoing communication, they encourage families and friends to return to visit a loved one's memorial or grave on a regular basis.

### Ambitions to scale

Growth is high on the priority list of GreenAcres's game plan, with the team actively looking for ways to set up in new locations. However, there simply isn't enough space in the UK - the scramble for new burial sites is industry wide. Research suggests that burial space will run

to a minimum in the near future, and the GreenAcres Group is determined that whilst they do continue their expansion efforts, at no point are families forced to settle for less than the burial or memorial they would want for a loved one.

With this in mind, the GreenAcres Group has invested in resources to support these aspirations, training a dedicated team across all locations, forming relationships with valued and trusted suppliers and diversifying the different services available.

### Stepping up to the challenge

The GreenAcres Group developed several strategies to strengthen and streamline their operations, including onboarding new equipment and systems. OpusXenta, software designed specifically for cemeteries and crematoria, was one of the discoveries made along the way, with the GreenAcres Group recognising that it could be a key player in supporting their work through periods of transition and growth.

Informing their approach throughout was the concept of LEAN continuous improvement, which involves increasing customer value, eliminating waste and optimising operations overall.

The OpusXenta software helps GreenAcres keep track of their records in one place, accessible by all from anywhere and makes the process of planning a funeral or life celebration from start to finish more efficient.

### Keeping in touch

Preserving connections with families is paramount to GreenAcres. The team believes strongly in providing death care services that are sensitive, personalised and supportive, and this extends beyond the day of the funeral or end of life celebration itself.

This all takes significant manpower, and although the team love talking to people, it is more practical to automate most standard communications. The OpusXenta software allows newsletters to be created, scheduled and sent out to a broad database of contacts. It also documents customer queries and preferences, creating client records that are comprehensive and simple to use.

### Managing the Supply Chain

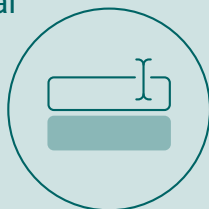
During the pandemic, the need for intuitive and flexible communication tools was never more important. As a piece of software, OpusXenta supported internal connection, held central records and kept everything running smoothly. In terms of maintaining business relationships with the many different suppliers and tradespeople within the death care industry, from florists to funeral directors, OpusXenta facilitated direct external communications and invoicing processes. This ensured that services ran seamlessly for customers and was especially important during the height of Covid-19 lockdown where most operations were orchestrated remotely.

### Planning for the future

Now that the GreenAcres Group has established a common operating system, they can focus on planning for the future. Expansion can be risky, however forecasting and orchestrating a strategy for growth can make taking chances a little less daunting.

For more information visit [www.greenacresgroup.co.uk](http://www.greenacresgroup.co.uk)

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This guide has been created by OpusXenta.

OpusXenta is a global technology provider to the death care sector with a presence across North America, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. We are focused on solving the complex challenges that funeral homes, cemeteries, and crematories encounter every day so they can focus on what is most important - serving their families.

We provide a complete solution through our comprehensive range of products and enable our customers to create operational excellence while also delivering amazing customer service.

**Our solutions can help with:**

- Arrangements and Bookings
- Business Intelligence
- Care Programmes
- Fund Management
- Cemetery Mapping
- Mason Permits
- Proxy Management
- Task Management

**Our products include:**

- byondcloud
- byondpro
- opuspay
- recordkeepr

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