

P-04-602 Personalisation of Graves – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 17.11.14

SENT ON BEHALF OF TORFAEN GRAVES ACTION GROUP

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your email & the attached letter from the Minister. For clarity, we have listed below background information and have been more specific, as requested.

For background, this issue came forward after Torfaen Council decided to enforce a policy that had been in existence for many years that had not been enforced previously. Grave personalisation had been allowed and some parents were given verbal agreements to site items. In May 2014 this changed. Based on verbal conversations with a very small number of grave visitors (no formal complaints received), the Officer decided to enforce the policy by posting notices on graveyard entrances, giving a short period of time for family to remove items. Many people are angry at this decision and believe that the Council have been heartless because many of these graves have been personalised without interference for over 22 yrs. Can you imagine how hurt so many people were? Torfaen Council then attended graves, stripped graves and sent items straight to landfill, in doing so, breaching their own 28 day storage policy. These issues are being addressed separately with TCBC and the Ombudsman, but we thought it would give some background to the reason for the petition.

We have discovered that councils in Wales have their own individual policies and levels of intervention and enforcement. So what is acceptable in 1 graveyard could be breaching rules just a couple of miles down the road. This isn't fair and equitable and should be regularised throughout Wales. So for clarity, the aim of the petition is :-

1. A "Cemetery Policy" be written and adopted by WG for all of Wales and that each Council in Wales adhere to the WG policy, to remove the inconsistencies and unfairness in the current multiple policies.
2. That Welsh Government are mindful of the delicate nature of personalisation of Graves, particularly Baby Graves.
3. To make the new policy up to date and current (solar lights, etc were not available when many of these council policies were written).

