

Graveyards – latest guidelines

The latest Environment Agency guidelines came into effect in October 2023 and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-groundwater-from-human-burials/protecting-groundwater-from-human-burials#existing-cemeteries-permitting-requirements>

These guidelines concern pollution of our water supplies.

For all of our current chapels and graveyards we are exempt from applying for a permit to operate because they existed before 02/10/23, but should aim to meet the minimum good practice groundwater protection measures, which are:

Measure 1

You should not carry out any human burials within:

- a groundwater source protection zone 1 (SPZ1). Graveyard location with regards to SPZ1 can be verified here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs>)
- 10 metres of the nearest field drain (a ditch or open land drain; a buried pipe or gravel filled trench designed to drain water)
- 30 metres from the nearest spring or watercourse
- 250 metres of any well, spring or borehole where the water is intended for human consumption or used in food production
- areas identified as having karstic groundwater flow characteristics – these areas are highly vulnerable to pollution because groundwater can flow quickly through the many fissures and fractures in the rocks

Measure 2

You should not carry out any human burials on land which is liable to flooding.

Measure 3

You should make the base of each grave at least 1 metre above the highest anticipated annual groundwater level.

Measure 4

You should not dig graves in unaltered or unweathered bedrock.

A permit will be needed if:

your cemetery needs active mitigation measures to prevent pollution

your cemetery is causing pollution or has very high pollution risks, and voluntary action to resolve these problems has not been successful – if so, the Environment Agency will tell you that you need to apply for a permit

All new graveyards will require a permit to operate from the Environment Agency and will have to comply with the minimum good practice groundwater protection measures outlined above.

MJH 02/02/24