

Be inspired: the biodiversity between the gravestones

How a group is nurturing life and death within a changing climate

“The city of the dead is supporting the city of the living” – *Colin Mackie from Friends of Southern Necropolis*

This case study was created as part of the work of Our Heritage, Our Future which looks at the impacts that climate change is having on our natural, built and cultural heritage; showcasing the fantastic work our Climate and Nature Friendly Communities Network groups are doing to protect heritage and mitigate climatic impacts.



The Friends of Southern Necropolis are a community group involved in Keep Scotland Beautiful's It's Your Neighbourhood initiative. The group have been looking after the Southern Necropolis for ten years, during which they have received a Green Flag Award consecutively for the past four years; an impressive achievement alongside their It's Your Neighbourhood certificates.

The group look after the Southern Necropolis, a 19-acre cemetery established in 1839, holding a quarter of a million burials in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. They aim to inspire the community through their actions and lead by example of how others can improve their own communities.

The group take pride in the Southern Necropolis and all the historical and heritage rich assets that are teeming within; from the rumours of the Gorbals Vampire hunting in the cemetery causing children to rally to protect their neighbourhood from this legendary beast (learn more about this [here](#), with Friends of Southern Necropolis volunteer Jimmy describing his experiences), to the burial locations of artists, lawyers, architects, explorers and war veterans; the Southern Necropolis draws people with connections to the cemetery and the significant figures within from all around the world.

The cemetery is B Listed, with areas of the cemetery like the gatehouse being designated a Listed A status. Glasgow City Council created a Southern Necropolis Heritage Trail, which guides visitors through a route of graves of interest. The Friends of Southern Necropolis have recently launched their own Heritage Trail booklet called 'A Window of Time', which includes more history of the Southern Necropolis with an additional 12 characters around the sections of the cemetery.



Not only does the cemetery hold significant historical value, it also provides great ecosystem services: it sustains pollinators through the areas left un-mowed and is bursting with flowers; being a safe and stimulating place for people to walk their dogs in; provides a peaceful and mindful environment where people can relax and enjoy the tranquillity of being surrounded by nature – the group recognise this and organise inclusive and accessible yoga events for everyone to join, with plans to make them monthly occurrences.

Because of climate change, globally we have seen and continue to see a decrease in biodiversity; flora and fauna cannot adapt quickly enough to the changing climate. The Friends of Southern Necropolis have provided a pollinator loving environment teeming with flowers on the outskirts of the cemetery, and also within, with the group planting flowers to beautify memorial areas. They carry out regular litter picks, removing potentially harmful litter to animals whilst continuing to inspire people on the benefits of caring for community greenspaces.



Climate change has resulted in irregular rainfall patterns and increased temperatures. This has increased the workload on volunteers regularly watering the planters. To reduce the workload, the planters made from reclaimed wood have had self-watering systems installed by an ingenious Friends of Southern Necropolis volunteer. Planters, which originally needed watering multiple times a week, can now be 'topped up' once a week.



Not only has this system proved to be invaluable at reducing workload, but it has also resulted in healthier and stronger plants.

Alongside this self-watering system, the group have made taps which they can put on full water bottles tipped over to provide regular watering to plants.

The Friends of Southern Necropolis take great pride in the work they do to look after the Southern Necropolis. They are boosting biodiversity amidst a nature and biodiversity crisis. They are ensuring local stories like the Gorbals Vampire stay alive. And they are inspiring others to look after other areas in their communities. The Friends of Southern Necropolis are preserving the city of the dead for the city of the living.

If you would like to learn about It's Your Neighbourhood and how to take part, please visit:

www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/our-communities-network/its-your-neighbourhood/

If you would like to learn about Our Heritage, Our Future, please visit:

www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/our-heritage-our-future/