



Cremations ban planned to cut mercury pollution

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By Graham Davies, Daily Post



THOUSANDS of families could be prevented from cremating their relatives in north Liverpool because of environmental concerns.

The city council has announced plans to stop cremations at Anfield Crematorium from April 1 because of a new law monitoring mercury pollution levels.

Services would still take place at the listed building, which is the country's oldest crematorium, but coffins would then be transported across the city to Springwood Crematorium, in Allerton.

Last night, council officials said Anfield, built in 1896, was unsuitable to fit a mercury filter but Springwood was.

But the Rev Harry Ross, vicar of St Lukes church in Walton, criticised the proposals, which he said would spell the end of a tradition for generations of his parishioners.

He said: "Why can't they use European money to fit it with a mercury filter? They can find money for all sorts of things. Why not this?"

"A cremation costs around £400 these days. Surely there must be some money the council can use to put this equipment in."

He added: "I don't think people will realise what exactly will happen. It is a great indignity for the families if they are having the service there, but the coffin is then being carted across the city."

A council spokesman said the idea was proposed because government guidelines requiring all crematoria to have filtering equipment will be implemented in 2012.

He added: "We can't confirm anything yet, as these are just proposals at the moment. But what we are suggesting is from April 1 coffins would be transferred to Springwood by private ambulance.

"Springwood is a modern building, built between 1974 and 1975. It can accommodate mercury filtering equipment at a cost of around £1m.

"With Anfield being a Victorian listed building which doesn't have the space to house the equipment, it could cost as much as £3m.

"We would have to exhume part of the cemetery and build a sandstone extension in keeping with the original building."

In January, ministers announced that mercury filters must be fitted in all crematoria by 2012 in an effort to halve emissions.

Mercury is released into the atmosphere when dental fillings are vaporised during cremation.

Exposure to the metal is linked to damage of the brain, nervous system and fertility. Crematoria are responsible for 16% of the UK's mercury pollution.

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