



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Leaders of Local Authorities in England

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Dear Colleague,

Parks and public spaces, including burial grounds and cemeteries

At the daily press briefing on Saturday, the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, expressed his admiration for the fantastic work local authorities are doing in these difficult times. I want to add my own appreciation for the contribution that you and all your colleagues are making, helping to keep essential services running and protecting those in our communities who are most at risk.

I wanted also to draw your attention to the Secretary of State's remarks about the importance of public parks and open spaces. The ability to step outside, take exercise and enjoy fresh air is important for so many of us at this difficult time. For many people, especially families with children and those who live in homes without a garden, access to public parks is a lifeline.

You know better than anyone the needs of local people and I know that you are trying incredibly hard to balance the need to maintain services alongside your wider responsibilities for the health and wellbeing of your residents.

This is no easy task. However, we would urge you to continue to have parks open, managing the social distancing requirements in the most practicable way while allowing people to take exercise. You can access Government guidance on this issue here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-guidance-on-access-to-green-spaces>

I also want to raise the issue of cemetery access. As the Secretary of State has said, during this difficult time, it is only right that families have an opportunity to pay their respects to loved ones who have lost their lives. In light of this, the closures guidance will be updated to make clear that burial grounds and cemeteries may remain open, and that grounds surrounding crematoria may also remain open, including gardens of remembrance. You can access Government guidance on closures here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>

My officials have made accompanying technical amendments to the Regulations to dispel all confusion surrounding the status of burial grounds, and people's ability to visit them and similar places. Please see here for the amendments to the Regulations: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/447/contents/made>, and here for the original Regulations: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/350/contents/made>.

I recognise the Regulations do not compel local authorities to keep anything open, and there are many reasonable justifications for why a burial ground or similar place may need to close temporarily – for example when conducting a funeral, or for maintenance. However, I urge you to take all practical steps towards enabling these places to be visited by grieving members of the public, in a safe manner consistent with social distancing guidelines.

I would be grateful if you could respond to confirm whether there are any parks or cemeteries in your area that remain closed. I will ask my officials to work with you to explore how the Government can support you to ensure that these vital facilities can be reopened for the public to use at this difficult time.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

SIMON CLARKE MP