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Crematorium will make a final farewell much easier



The company's director Howard Hodgson at the new site



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by Pete Hughes, Reporter covering Abingdon and Wantage, South Oxford and Kennington. Call me on 01865 425431

A NEW £4m crematorium - the third in the county - will meet a growing demand in Oxfordshire when it opens on Friday, experts say.

The South Oxfordshire Crematorium and Memorial Park, on the A338 between East Hanney and Frilford, will open on January 2 and also offer traditional burials.

It will carry out up to 1,200 cremations a year and 181,000 people will live closer to it than Oxfordshire's other crematoriums at Barton and Banbury.

Of those, 87,000 will previously have lived more than 30 minutes' drive away from their nearest crematorium.



Wantage funeral director George Godfrey, of J Godfrey and Son, said the new facility would make life much easier for an increasing number of families wanting cremations rather than burials.

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He said: "It will be a major asset to the community, quite a few people are already saying it.

"At the moment you have to go to Oxford, Swindon or Thatcham, and each of those is three quarters of an hour drive from Wantage, sometimes a lot more.

"If you have an early ceremony you have to get up at 7.30am, which is just ridiculous – it's not nice for the families at all."

Mr Godfrey said in the past 10 years he had seen a 20 per cent rise in people choosing cremations over burials, up to two thirds of his customers.

He said cremations, starting at £600, were simply a cheaper option than burials, which in large, crowded towns could cost up to £3,000 for a plot alone.

Oxford City Council said last month that the need to find a new city cemetery, described as "urgent" three years ago, had lessened because more people are choosing cremation.

Chief executive of Memoria, the private company behind the new facility, Howard Hodgson said: "We have identified a critical need for cremation and burial services in the local area and believe that families will appreciate the opportunity to receive a distinguished service in a beautiful setting. We realise that we are unable to eradicate the pain of bereavement.

"However, we also know that it is our duty to be as efficient, kind, respectful and polite as humanly possible. The new Memorial Park will achieve this through the quality of our dedicated staff."

The new Frilford facility will offer services of any religious denomination or non-religious. Memoria has opened 11 crematoria in the last decade, the highest number of any operator in the UK sector.

Meanwhile, a two-month consultation about where to create a new graveyard in Eynsham ends today. St Leonard's Church in the village expects its own graveyard to be full in less than a year.

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