

Reducing emissions from funerals

David Billington, Funeral Director at Full Circle Funerals tells us how this SME with an office in Harrogate is reducing and offsetting some of their carbon emissions.



Why did you decide to make the business more climate friendly?

The environment has always been important to me, and I have learnt from documentaries and books through the years. We need to lead by our own actions and not wait for other people. We have found that the more we talk to other people the more they learn which more environmental and climate friendly choices are an option within the funeral industry.

What changes have you made?

We have purchased two electric vehicles, an electric hearse as well as an electric limo. Both are Nissan Leafs.

We have solar panels on the roof of our Guiseley base where the electric hearse is recharged renewably.

In conversations with bereaved family members, we try to encourage them to incorporate green features. However, we emphasise that a funeral doesn't have to be green or not green – there is more nuance than that.

Some of the environmentally friendly elements can be cheaper as well as better for the climate. For example, using locally available seasonal flowers (even from your own garden) has much lower emissions than bringing in blooms in from hothouses or from Holland. Some of these choices also brings down the cost.

Within our business, we have an environmental policy. For example, we are conscious of limiting use of energy through having motion sensors on some of our lights, and top notch insulation so we are not wasting energy. Also, we use plant based cleaning materials to limit the damage on the environment.

A lot of our employees can walk or cycle to work easily.

What is the impact of the changes you have made on the carbon footprint of your business?

We do not know the full detail yet as we are a young business, we started in 2016, and we are still learning different the ways we can incorporate environmental elements into our business and how this has affected our footprint. For example, different coffins have different carbon footprints, linked to the materials used and where they are sourced and transported from. We also discuss sustainable sources eg wool, wicker and cloth shrouds, which might be more sustainable. However, it is complicated to know which option has a lower carbon footprint – but if the manufacturing is based in UK and local natural materials are used we believe the emissions from production and transportation are lower. We are doing some research on this – but it is complicated and we have limited information to date.

One of the things we have done to offset carbon emissions is to work with Make it Wild near Summerbridge. For every funeral we have a tree planted to offset the carbon. Some families choose to plant an additional memorial tree.

What are the business benefits of discussing environmental choices and tree planting?

Most people like our approach. We now have people who seek us out because we have positioned ourselves as more environmentally friendly funerals ethos.

Within the organisation we feel more of a personal sense of achievement and pride from knowing we are a part of company that cares about the environment.

What else could your business do to reduce emissions?

We will be looking at moving our energy contracts onto renewable energy providers in the future to further reduce our impact, and increasing the use of solar panels on our sites (where possible).

For more information please contact:

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