

Alarm on lodge house in Dalry Cemetery to be “deactivated”

Following a long running court case involving the owner of the lodge house at Dalry Cemetery, Philippa Berry, and the founder of Friends of Dalry Cemetery, Jakob Assarsson, it has been agreed that the alarm at the lodge house will be deactivated.

The alarm which sounded a loud “air raid style” siren had been installed by Ms Berry after buying the house from the council in 2016. Although funerals at the cemetery are now rare, the siren sounded during the two minute silence at remembrance services held by the Friends group despite the owner being given advance notice.

In 2023 Ms Berry accused Mr Assarsson and the Friends of harassment, and obtained an interim interdict to prevent him from either working or going near her house. She had multiple cameras fitted to the exterior of the house, along with the alarm which sounded when anyone entered the cemetery. Since then the court action continued but has been recently settled without liability on either side on the basis that Ms Berry removes the alarm and restricts any new alarms to within her property boundary.

The other terms of the settlement are confidential although Mr Assarsson said he has waived a portion of his legal expenses

as part of the agreement.

Mr Assarsson said that the “important thing is that it’s finally over”. He said to all his supporters: “Thank you so much for your support through this and your ongoing support. I couldn’t have done this without you.”

He founded the [Friends](#) group during lockdown to voluntarily improve and clean up the cemetery grounds as well as giving volunteers somewhere to spend time outdoors. All Friends groups in the city are governed by rules laid down by the The City of Edinburgh Council.

Cllr Ross McKenzie said: “I’m really glad to hear that this issue has been resolved. Friends of Dalry Cemetery make an incredible contribution to the area. Hopefully this resolution will allow them to continue with their great work at the cemetery and beyond.”

Jakob set up a GoFundMe page to assist in defending himself against the court action by Ms Berry in which he explained the situation: “One local resident recently had an exterior siren installed. This ‘gate alarm’ has no security function for their house. Instead, it goes off whenever someone enters the Cemetery through the main cemetery gates on Dalry Road, from early morning to late evening, seven days a week.

“The siren has been installed as a deterrent to prevent the public enjoying a precious green space that local people have worked so tirelessly to improve. It is also distressing to those visiting family graves. The resident also manually activates various additional sirens and alarms at specific people, such as me and my family, and other group volunteers.

“The resident describes the driveway at the main entrance to the cemetery as ‘shared’, although in reality it is wholly owned by the City of Edinburgh Council and the resident only has access across it. In using adjacent areas to turn their vehicle, they have repeatedly driven over graves, including a

Commonwealth war grave, churning the grass into mud.”

He explained that he had to defend himself to ensure the issue was permanently resolved.

The fundraising page which has to date raised more than £21,000 continues as there are legal fees still to settle, although there is an undertaking that any surplus will be invested in the Friends group. Their recent activities include setting up a Little Free Library in the cemetery.

[The GoFundMe page is here.](#)



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