



What happens when graveyard spaces run out? Free 311224

## Description



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## **What do Karl Marx, George Michael and Michael Faraday have in common?**

They are buried in Highgate Cemetery.

It is one of the most famous burial grounds in the country, with 170,000 people buried in 53,000 graves.

But what happens when space runs out?

This is something being discussed by the Law Commission – an independent body which reviews legislation in England and Wales – which is proposing a widespread change in burial laws.

It could result in existing graves being reused to address burial space shortages.

According to current legislation, it's illegal to disturb a grave.

However, in 2022 Highgate Cemetery went to parliament, external to get the right to reuse graves that have not have anyone buried in them for 75 years.

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Ian Dungavell, the chief executive of Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, said: "There are a lot of safeguards for grave owners.

"If a relative objects, that grave would be protected for 25 years."

He also said: "Because we're a heritage cemetery, we don't want to destroy what people come to see.

"Elegant graves, with a nice monument, would be left as they are.

"There are many graves where there is no monument, so no heritage is destroyed."

Grave reuse has always been allowed in Church of England graveyards, as well as with special acts of parliament.

Professor Nick Hopkins, law commissioner for property, family and trust law said: "Some of the laws date back to the 1850s, or earlier, so it's time they were reviewed.

"There was a government study in 2007, which estimated we'd run out of grave space in around 30 years."

He also said London would run out of grave space sooner because of the high population – and that a plan needs to be put in place now to ensure grave space remains available in the future.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQKpQJhRzRY&list=PLtnxlcx-lhIKCgG4pZ4qpFN1A9WrdlxZ>

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2. UK

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