

# NAFD gets serious about going green

## Launch of the NAFD Environmental Advisory Group

It is hard to think of one issue that has had such a rallying effect across all sections of society in all corners of the world. How we live in, and with our environment, has dominated the news agenda, from Copenhagen to Westminster. Understandably, public concern has followed and consumer trends reflect an increase in support for organisations which can demonstrate environmentally sound credentials in the way that they run their businesses. Against this backdrop, the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) has formed an Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) to assist its members in providing socially responsible and environmentally sound funeral service. The Group has been formed under the direction of NAFD Chief Executive Officer, Alan Slater, drawing on the experience of Julian Atkinson, Jeremy Field, David Hyde and Martin Smith.

Over the last three to five years, the funeral profession has seen a marked increase in the number of companies offering 'green' funeral services and components thereof. This has led to a perceived boom in what are often termed 'alternative funerals'. The starting point for the Group has been to establish terms of reference under which the Group will operate and formulate its advice to NAFD members. The fundamental starting point

has been to establish that there is no need to call for wholesale change in the way that the UK funeral profession operates. Equally, the Group has emphasised that reducing the environmental impact of funerals does not mean an end to the 'traditional' funeral. The Group, will therefore, formulate practical advice and policies that can be followed by funeral directors, regardless of size. This guidance will form a framework upon which the good practice that already exists within most member businesses can be built.

At the EAG's inaugural meeting, held at NAFD National Office on 9 February 2010, the view was taken that, to establish a division within the profession between those that offer 'green' funeral services and those that do not, would be to draw false battle lines and ultimately confuse or mislead consumers. Therefore, it was decided that they key lay in articulating how increasing environmental awareness and consciousness fits with the daily work of the funeral director in caring for the bereaved. Additionally, the Group reflected that, of the many areas under consideration, the vast majority would lead to reducing the overall costs to the business – such as reduced energy and utility costs.

Having met, the Group is now finalising its preliminary guidelines which will ultimately

be presented to the NAFD Executive for consideration before being published and distributed to the membership. But the work does not stop there. The NAFD intends to dedicate a regular spot to matters environmental in the *Funeral Director Monthly*, discussing issues relevant to funeral directors and the profession as a whole. There will be an open meeting hosted by the EAG at the forthcoming NAFD Conference in May where members will have the opportunity to meet members of the EAG and discuss their experiences in increasing environmental responsibility as well as raise matters which should be addressed.

As the "voice" of the funeral profession in the UK, the NAFD will continue to lead the debate on the issues that shape the way in which we operate, addressing the issues that are important to those that our members serve. Over the coming months, you will be hearing more about the ways in which this latest addition to the NAFD will seek to add to the support which we are able to provide to our members.

### Who are the members of the EAG?

An environmental consultant and advisor to the National Funeral Exhibition, **Martin Smith** has an in-depth knowledge of the funeral profession and an excellent working

relationship with the NAFD. His understanding of the application of 'green credentials' in funeral service provides a strong and credible foundation to the Group.

**Julian Atkinson's** credentials as a businessman with an eye for the environment are beyond reproach. Since becoming Managing Director of J C Atkinson & Son Ltd, his drive for environmental excellence and innovation has been breathtaking to witness. As well as sporting an enviable list of awards for environmental best practice in business, such as *The Sunday Times Best Green Company 2008* and a *National Green Apple Award for Environmental Best Practice Engineering and*

*Manufacturing*, Julian is also an advisor to the All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group.

Organiser of the hugely successful National Funeral Exhibition 2009 (NFE), **David Hyde** has developed an excellent working knowledge of the funeral profession. His role in organising the NFE places David in a unique position providing a vital link between working funeral directors and supplier companies to the profession.

Understanding the public demand for, and perception of, environmentally responsible funerals and its impact on funeral directors is a vital component the Group's work. As

Managing Director of C.P.J. Field & Co., a leading independent funeral service company in the south east, **Jeremy Field** understands the commercial importance of delivering ethical and responsible funerals for clients who want to know that all funerals are being carried out with these considerations firmly in mind.

The cornerstone of the group is NAFD Chief Executive Officer, **Alan Slater**. In appreciating the importance of taking the lead in guidance on matters environmental, the NAFD is able to better assist its membership as well as help to protect consumers from often misleading advice.



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