

South Metropolitan (West Norwood) Cemetery

Filming Policy



Document Control

Version	Drafted	Approved
v1 – March 2016	K Crook / N Long	Scheme of Management Committee
v2 – January 2026	Kevin Crook	West Norwood Cemetery Strategic Partnership Board (14 January 2026)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to act as a guide for those planning to undertake filming and commercial photography inside West Norwood Cemetery. The cemetery is owned by Lambeth Council but is subject to a Scheme of Management following a Consistory Court judgement, with governance now provided through a Strategic Partnership Board holding full powers of management. It benefits from the active support of a long-established Friends group (the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery) whose members have considerable knowledge of the history of the cemetery and the people buried or commemorated there. The Strategic Partnership Board welcomes commercial filming and photography within the cemetery which meets the requirements of these policy guidelines and brings financial benefit to the authority.

Site Contact

In the first instance all enquiries should be made to the Lambeth Film Office, which is an in-house team within Lambeth's Growth and Environment Directorate. The contact details are:

Phone: 0207 926 5489

Email: filming@lambeth.gov.uk

Web: <https://film.lambeth.gov.uk/>

West Norwood Cemetery

This 39.5-acre cemetery was one of the first private landscaped cemeteries in London and is one of the so-called 'Magnificent Seven'. It is a site of major historical, architectural and ecological interest and its importance is recognized nationally and internationally. The grounds are a mixture of historic monumental cemetery and modern lawn cemetery, but it also has catacombs, cremation plots and a columbarium. It has been described as having the finest collection of sepulchral monuments in London and contains 200,000 burials and cremations. The site holds 69 Grade II and Grade II* listed monuments and structures, including a dedicated Hellenic Enclosure with 19 listed mausoleums and monuments. Its extensive Gothic Revival architecture qualifies it as one of the most significant cemeteries in Europe.

Definitions

'Filming' refers to all forms of moving image production. This includes feature films, television, news gathering, commercials, music videos, drama documentaries, corporate productions, video and interactive media, and any videos uploaded to social media.

'Photography' refers to all forms of still, digital and photo imaging. This includes advertising, editorial, fashion and corporate photography.

This guidance is primarily intended for commercial and non-personal film makers. It is not intended to apply to people attending the cemetery for a burial, funeral service, cremation or commemorative event and recording a moving image or taking photographs of the event solely for personal viewing. Such images must not subsequently be sold commercially without seeking the permission of Lambeth Council. However, please see and have regard to the additional guidance below on filming for personal purposes.

On account of the sensitive and special nature of the cemetery, Lambeth Council will not hesitate to take appropriate action in relation to any unauthorised filming.

News and Current Affairs

For the avoidance of doubt, material intended for news programmes should be discussed in the first instance with Lambeth's Press Office. For full contact details please [click here](#).

Filming Policy Guidelines

All requests to film will be assessed by Lambeth's Head of Bereavement Services against consideration for existing scheduled funerals, events, planned maintenance work and burials.

The Film Office may suggest a site meeting to allow the Head of Bereavement Services to meet film-makers face-to-face and discuss the logistics of their request. This is essential for large-scale or complicated productions, and for any proposed filming within the catacombs. An early meeting and/or discussion with production staff will be appreciated.

Film makers will be asked to provide in writing as much information as possible on the following: proposed dates and times; potential locations; content and nature of the script or relevant script pages; public liability insurance; potential stunts; special effects; pyrotechnics; wet-downs; use of firearms, knives or other weapons; nudity; numbers of vehicles, cast, crew and extras; equipment and parking.

Points to note for commercial filming

- A licence to film will be issued by the Film Office in advance and a copy must be held by the crew on site during the filming. Any conditions or restrictions specified in the licence must be respected and Lambeth Council reserves the right to rescind the licence if the conditions are breached. No filming may take place until the licence has been issued.
- Filming of a blasphemous, salacious or derogatory nature will not be permitted. Filming relating to Gothic or supernatural themes will need consideration by Lambeth Council on a case-by-case basis and with reference to the Chair/Co-Chairs of the Strategic Partnership Board.
- Films that are of, or might acquire, cult status will need to be more carefully considered. The possibility of a grave or a scene within the cemetery becoming a visitor attraction in its own right requires careful management.
- Most of the site is consecrated and the grounds are completely full of burials, although there might not be surface memorials, which means that sensitivity is required at all times, and care must be taken to not place large equipment or vehicles on grassed areas, as they will be on top of graves.
- Public access to the cemetery during advertised opening hours must be maintained at all times, and visitors must have precedence over the right of access to specific graves they are visiting. Signage must be installed at the cemetery entrances and at the perimeter of the filming location to inform visitors that filming is taking place. The signage must include an on-call telephone number and other contact details for a senior responsible person within

the production team, and inform visitors of how they can ensure their image is not caught on film.

- Filming which requires shots of gravestones will need specific permission to photograph or video personal details that appear as inscriptions. Inscriptions that can identify recent burials (i.e. less than 30 years old) must not be published or visible on film without the express consent of the Head of Bereavement Services or the plot owner, if they are contactable.
- Careful planning is required to ensure that no damage is caused to headstones, building structures, signage, trees, grass verges or flower beds. If any damage is caused, your company will be liable to pay for the repairs plus any administration fees incurred.
- Any requirements for temporary road or path closures, or having areas cordoned off must be agreed with the Head of Bereavement Services beforehand.
- Permission must be sought to drive vehicles on metalled walkways and roads through the cemetery, and the weight limit tolerances must not be exceeded. Vehicles should keep strictly to the metalled surfaces. If they move off the carriageway they risk collapsing kerbs, burial spaces and burial vaults, which cannot always be seen.
- If driving vehicles through the cemetery, all drivers must obey the speed limit (10mph).
- No rubbish is to be left in the cemetery on departure. If any rubbish is found, this will be treated as fly-tipping and the company concerned may be fined. Large, wheeled rubbish bins are situated by the Crematorium and the main entrance of the cemetery. These can be used for rubbish disposal within reason; separate arrangements must be made for excessive quantities of rubbish.
- If the cemetery is to be used outside opening times, security staff (paid for by the film company) must be on duty at all times. Additional charges will be levied to pay for a member of Lambeth staff to be in attendance and lock the cemetery gates at the end of the session.
- Please be polite and courteous to members of the public visiting the cemetery at all times. Noise must be kept to a minimum, particularly at night, as there are residential properties all around the cemetery.
- Although they might not be marked, all areas of the cemetery have been used for burials, except for the roads and paths. Everywhere is potentially a sacred space. Many graves were sold in perpetuity, and even if memorials appear abandoned – or are just overgrown – it should be assumed each plot is potentially owned by someone who has an interest in the burial. Graves can hold private property, e.g. headstones, plants and tributes, which should be respected. Therefore, when considering placing objects on a grave or a clearing, account should be taken of the reaction of a family descendant who has come to visit. Many graves have had their headstones or markers removed, and all areas of open grass have burials underneath. If in any doubt, please discuss with the Head of Bereavement Services.
- Specific conditions will be imposed for filming in the catacombs. Consent will be granted in exceptional circumstances only, as there are significant hazards and health and safety issues. Any filming will require the presence of a member of staff from the Bereavement Services team to monitor activity. Depending on the extent of the filming this may be chargeable, and the cost will have to be met in advance. It will be understood the monitors have the authority to require a halt to film unit or filming activity if the terms or conditions of the licence are breached or exceeded.
- If generators are used, they should be placed so as to minimise noise nuisance; drip pans

should be placed underneath them and any oil or fuel spills dispersed and mopped up immediately.

- Due to a lack of parking capacity, only essential technical vehicles and cars or small vans may park on site. All other vehicles must be parked at a separate unit base outside the cemetery.
- There should be no open fires created on site and no digging deeper than six inches (15cm). Any digging should be in areas identified and confirmed by the Head of Bereavement Services as clear of burials.
- Flexibility over scheduling will be required if burials need to be arranged after filming dates were booked.
- All commercial filmmakers are encouraged to make a donation to the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.
- Any filming or photography in the Enclosure, St. Stephen's Chapel or immediately adjacent (with the plot as background) needs to be discussed with the Hellenic Enclosure Association. This will be managed directly by the Lambeth Film Office.
- The use of a drone or other aerial or elevated device (including a 'cherry picker') for filming or photography purposes will give rise to special considerations centered on safety, privacy for neighbouring properties and minimising disturbance.

Filming for personal purposes

- Filming at a burial, during a visit to a grave, outside the Crematorium, in the Rose Garden or in other parts of the cemetery for purely personal purposes is permitted without the need for a licence.
- Additionally, filming by people engaged in bona fide cemetery-related academic, architectural, funereal, genealogical, historical or landscape research may do so without the need for a licence but, if at all possible, they should identify themselves in advance to the staff at the cemetery office and explain their interest and purpose.
- Any filming at a burial or during a crematorium service should only be with the express consent of the next-of-kin of the deceased and undertaken discreetly; with due and proper regard to religious and other sensitivities.
- If, subsequently, the images are to be shown or displayed publicly or used commercially in any way, then a licence must be obtained from Lambeth Council in advance of first display or use.