

# OFFICIAL

## **The DNA sampling process for Burials at Sea at the Needles, Isle of Wight.**

### **Information for Funeral Director and Burial at Sea companies**

#### **Why is a DNA sample required?**

In order to obtain a licence for a Burial at Sea at the Needles site, it is now a requirement for a DNA sample to be taken from the deceased before they enter the water. Although a rare occurrence, remains from burials at sea in this area can come ashore and consequently need to be identified. It is only a requirement for the Needles site at this time as remains are not known to have come ashore at the other sites off the English coast. Being able to identify the remains through DNA testing will reduce costs and resources for the Police who are responsible for identification.

Once obtained, the DNA profile will be stored indefinitely on the Missing Persons DNA Database (MPDD). This Database holds DNA profiles relating to missing people and unidentified remains found across the UK and is managed by the UK Missing Persons unit (UKMPU). Further details on the process can be found in the detailed guidance available through the MMO website.

#### **Will I have to obtain consent from next of kin of the deceased to take a DNA sample?**

Yes, you will need to ensure you have obtained appropriate consent for a DNA sample to be taken from the deceased. To enable you to do this, you must complete the consent training provided by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) which has been specifically designed for this process. Further information on this training can be found in the detailed guidance document available on the MMO website. Please ensure you contact the HTA and allow enough time to complete the training before you plan a burial at sea at the Needles site. Consent forms are available on the MMO website and will need to be signed and completed by the person in the highest qualifying relationship to the deceased prior to their death before contacting University Hospital Southampton to book a DNA sampling appointment. Please note only one consent form is required per burial. If consent is not provided then the individual cannot be buried at sea at the Needles and alternative arrangements will need to be made; conducting the burial at a different burial at sea site where DNA sampling is not required or cremating the deceased and scattering their ashes at sea. Further information on both of these options can be found on the MMO website.

You must ensure that whoever provides consent is consenting for the DNA sample to be taken **AND** retained indefinitely on the Missing Persons DNA Database. They will not be able to ask for the DNA profile to be removed from the Missing Persons DNA Database at any time after the burial at sea has taken place. It must be retained indefinitely to ensure any remains that may come ashore years in the future can be identified.

Please note there is a factsheet specifically for those planning a Burial at Sea which has additional information on the process. It can be used as part of the consent taking process and is available on the MMO website.

#### **How is DNA taken and by whom?**

A detailed step by step guide of the DNA sampling process is described in more detail in the detailed guidance document which is available on the MMO website. When planning a burial and organising the DNA sampling, please ensure the guidance is followed closely and each step is completed in the order it is listed to prevent any unnecessary delays to the burial process. The DNA sampling itself is conducted by University Hospital Southampton and you will need to contact them directly to book the DNA sampling appointment. Numerous other parties are involved in the process and will assist with the recording and processing of the DNA profile. More information on the role of these different organisations can be found in the detailed guidance document.

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## **What happens once DNA sampling has taken place?**

You will be asked to wait at the hospital whilst the DNA sampling is taking place. Once the sampling appointment is complete, you will be provided with a DNA submission form which will act as evidence that a DNA sample has been taken for the individual. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) requires you to upload a copy of the DNA submissions form to the license application in the same way you would load the other mandatory certificates which are required as part of the license application. As soon as the documentation has been uploaded and the license issued, the individual can be buried at sea. The hospital will organise the movement of the DNA sample from the hospital to the Forensic Service Provider (FSP) for the DNA samples to be processed and a DNA profile obtained. The Forensic Service Provider (FSP) will then request the DNA profile is loaded to the Missing Persons DNA Database (MPDD) with no further action required from yourselves.

Once the DNA profile is loaded to the Missing Persons DNA database (MPDD), it will remain on the database indefinitely in case any remains come ashore in the future. If remains are found, they will be automatically compared to DNA held for any deceased person taken as part of this process and you will be notified of any matches by Hampshire Police. We will then ask you to contact next of kin and we can then support and advise on next steps.

## **What is the cost of this service?**

There are two fees required as part of the DNA sampling process and both are payable to University Hospital Southampton Mortuary Trust. The first fee is a one off contract completion fee and the second fee is for the DNA sampling itself. Please contact Southampton Hospital directly for specific, up to date information on these costs are. Their contact details are available in the detailed guidance document available on the MMO website. The contract completion fee will be payable prior to the DNA sampling appointment and second DNA sampling fee is payable on completion of the DNA sampling appointment. You will be issued with an invoice and the outstanding fee will be payable directly to them within 30 days. Please note, failure to pay this fee when requested may result in their refusal to conduct any DNA sampling on your behalf in the future. Please note any costings are subject to review so please contact them for up to date costings.

## **What happens if remains from a burial at sea are located?**

If remains are found which prove to be a match to the DNA held on the Missing Persons DNA Database for a person known to have been buried at sea, the Funeral Director or Burial at Sea Company organising the burial will be contacted by Hampshire Police. They will then be asked to make contact with next of kin for the deceased to discuss options available to them. The nature and size of the remains located may determine whether next of kin wish to request a reburial or whether they are happy for Hampshire Police to sensitively destroy any located remains.

If you require any additional information on the Burials at Sea process, please visit the Marine Management Organisation website where additional resources are available.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-get-a-license-for-a-burial-at-sea-in-england](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-get-a-license-for-a-burial-at-sea-in-england)