

RESOMATION

Howard Pickard, MD of Resomation Ltd, the company behind water cremation in the UK, updates *Funeral Service Times* readers on progress introducing this sustainable funeral option in the UK and how water cremation can be a new choice for the environmentally conscious



I last spoke with *Funeral Service Times* in September 2018 and it is safe to say there has been some substantial progress we have made in our efforts to introduce water cremation as an end-of-life option in the UK.

Many funeral industry insiders who read *Funeral Service Times* may already be aware, but for those who have not yet heard, resomation is an environmentally friendly alternative to flame cremation and burial which uses water instead of flame to gently bring the body to ashes.

The process is simple, copying what nature does during burial, by using a gentle solution of 95% water and 5% alkaline to enable the body to go through the natural process of breaking down to its constituent parts. You are left with ashes to return to the family as with flame cremation.

Water cremation is not currently available in the UK, but Resomation Ltd is working with the funeral industry, regulators and local authorities to raise awareness of this technology. The FBCA established a water cremation working group which provides a forum for updates and information about our activities and allowing us to work collaboratively with

sector experts. Resomation Ltd has also been present at industry events and seminars across the UK and abroad.

Readers in the general public may not have heard much of Resomation and water cremation yet and there is a reason for this. We have felt it appropriate to engage firstly with the industry and regulators because they are involved in laying the foundations for the introduction of this technology. Once the introduction is getting closer, we will increase our public facing efforts in association with the sector, communicating this new option for end of life in the UK.

I can report healthy progress abroad. Water cremation, or alkaline hydrolysis as they know it in

North America, is well-established in the US and Canada, with 20 US states and four Canadian provinces passing legislation to make water cremation available for end-of-life. This is six extra areas in North America where water cremation will be a funeral option since my previous conversation with *Funeral Service Times*. Resomation has been operating in North America for seven years now with its adoption growing all the time. This is expected to accelerate next year as California allows it to be introduced due to their strong environmental laws.

Funeral Service Times readers may have seen that Washington state has recently legalised human composting after a healthy debate about

the environmental and sustainability of this approach. On this side of the Atlantic, the Netherlands moves closer to introducing water cremation. Resomation founder, Sandy Sullivan, recently addressed the Dutch funeral industry at a key event where there is a real anticipation about the imminent passing





of legislation for this new option, with expectations that water cremation will therefore be installed in the Netherlands sometime next year.

The Dutch example I mention is primarily driven by water cremation's environmental credentials. Independent reports have found that water cremation has a lower impact on the environment than other end of life options, including less carbon footprint and energy consumption and no airborne release of harmful emissions.

Latest polling from YouGov shows that the UK public is more concerned about the environment than ever before, with a quarter of Britons citing the environment in their top three issues facing the country. With climate emergencies being declared across the country and the Extinction Rebellion protests gaining widespread coverage, more people are considering the environment and the impact of their choices.

We have seen through conversations with attendees at our well attended open days and industry events that attitudes are changing within our sector towards the environment. More people are looking

for eco-friendly alternatives through their lives and wish to also make this choice on their death.

Many other industries are evolving to meet these new expectations with reduction in single-use plastics featuring heavily. We, at Resomation, believe the funeral industry can lead on delivering an eco-friendly choice with water cremation meeting this new demand whilst contributing to wider carbon and emission reduction targets.

We know that *Funeral Service Times* readers will want to know one thing – when will funeral providers be able to offer water cremation? The answer remains 'not yet' but our

priority is to engage with funeral directors, crematoria and industry leaders to build a consensus on water cremation and its safe introduction in the UK. Whilst most readers will understand and appreciate the pace of change in an industry which is not accustomed to change, we remain committed to respecting the views of stakeholders by carefully and considerably laying solid foundations.

We are encouraged by the reception we are increasingly receiving and hope to be able to provide *Funeral Service Times* readers with updates on further progress soon. I hope this article provides a timely update on Resomation Ltd's work, alongside the wider debates being held over consideration of the environment.

We welcome input and comments from *Funeral Service Times* readers about this new sustainable funeral option and to support industry professionals when it is made available in the UK. We are hosting our next open day on 26 September. To attend, register your interest at info@resomation.com. ■

