

# Advantage

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Improving later life

## Spread the Warmth

Hot tips for keeping warm  
and safe this winter p8



Inside: 'Who Cares?'  
campaign postcard



p4: A VIP opening  
for Helpline



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Day 2011



## A shorter final journey

**Guest columnist James Aitken welcomes new crematoria in the Borders**

The Borders' first crematorium will begin operation by the end of this year. The crematorium will be located next to Wairds cemetery just outside Melrose in the shadow of the Eildon Hills. A postcard perfect location.

But the good news does not end there. Work has started on a second crematorium at Houndwood Church in Berwickshire.

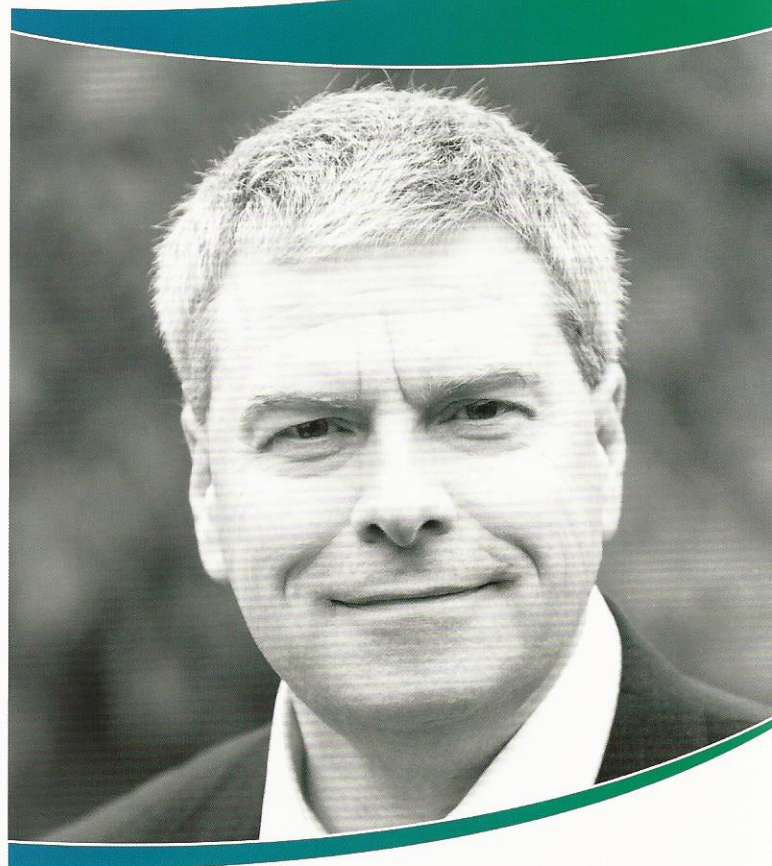
Why, you might ask, is this good news? The answer is a simple one. At the moment if you live in the Borders and wish to be cremated, your family and friends have to travel to either Edinburgh, Carlisle or Newcastle, journeys that can often be long and stressful and in the winter might not even be possible. I suspect that this is an issue that affects many other rural communities in Scotland.

The facility at Wairds will be run by Westerleigh, the UK's second largest crematorium operator, and will cost approximately £2.6 million. The building will contain an 84-seat chapel with standing room for 100 outside. The expected annual number of cremations is 500. It is estimated that this will rise to 900 within 10 years of operation.

I am originally from Galashiels and still split my time between the Borders and Edinburgh. The main road to Edinburgh is the A7, a road that is best described as 'bendy', with few overtaking opportunities, congested during the main commuting times and in the winter, distinctly hazardous. So little has its layout changed that my great grandparents, if still alive, would have little trouble recognising the road today.

It is usually the case that after a church service in one of the Borders towns, the body would be transported to Mortonhall crematorium in Edinburgh. Those attending the crematorium would then have to head back South and as is customary, be invited by the family to a local venue for a cup of tea, sometimes something a little stronger, and a bite to eat.

Because this is also a chance to pay your respects to the family, it could entail a round trip of over 100



miles and taking a full day off work. The opening of these two new crematoria will, for large numbers of Borders' residents, mean not having to make journeys of this nature in future.

As we know, a time of bereavement is difficult enough without having a stressful journey to cope with as well. That is why this is such good news for the Borders and why I would like to note my thanks to all of those who finally made this happen.

James Aitken is a partner with Legal Knowledge Scotland and a board member of the Borders' Chambers of Commerce.

**If you have an idea for a Soap Box column,** call Doug Anthoney on **0845 833 9313**, email **advantage@agescotland.org.uk** or write to Doug at the Age Scotland office address on the back-page. The views of Soap Box columnists do not necessarily reflect Age Scotland's views or policies.