

Metal from people's cremated remains being turned into road signs



The Bristol Post Follow **By Heather Pickstock**

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A COUNCIL is recycling metal body parts from cremated remains and turning them into road signs.

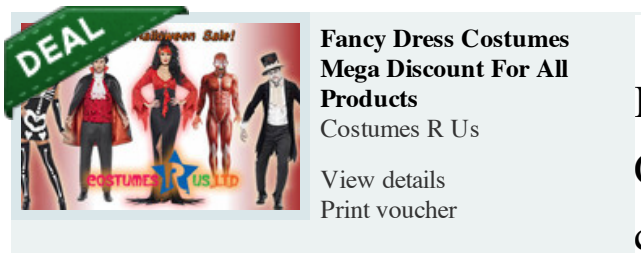
Items such as replacement hip joints, metal plates from legs and skulls and screws fitted to various body parts are collected after cremations in Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare.

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Other items collected include metal clamps which are sometimes left on the bodies of patients who die on the operating table.

Metal plates in false teeth are also sometimes recovered and, in Weston and Bath, recycled along with some types of metal used in tooth fillings and any metal handles fitted to the coffins.



Bristol City Council, which currently buries

recovered metal in the grounds of its crematoriums, is also considering a move to recycling when its current policy is banned by an upcoming change in the law.

Metal for recycling is collected in a large wheelie bins at the crematoriums and taken to a specialist plant for recycling by contractors.

The metals are then melted down – and The Post has learned that in North Somerset, it has been used to make items including council road signs, lamppost poles and safety barriers for motorway central reservations.

People booking a cremation service are asked if they want to keep metal parts which may have been fitted during their deceased relative's life.

Those families who do not want them sign a special form agreeing for them to be recycled.

Once the cremation is over, a machine known as a cremulator is used to separate any metal from the ashes.

Weston-super-Mare Crematorium, run on behalf of North Somerset Council by contractor Dignity, holds an average of between four and five services a day and The Post has learned that around one large bin

a month is filled with the unwanted metal body parts for recycling.

A source at the crematorium said: "Some people want to keep the metal items, which is understandable. But many people don't and they are collected and sent off for recycling."

Bristol City Council, which operates crematoriums at Canford Lane, Westbury-on-Trym, and off the A38 in Bedminster Down, is currently looking at introducing a scheme where metals are sold for recycling, with any profits going to a charity.

Older replacement hip joints were made of steel but newer ones are made of titanium or alloys.

A spokesman for the city council said: "We are looking to appoint a contractor, on a similar basis to the other councils, which will remove the unwanted metal body parts following cremation.

"Any proceeds from the sale of the metal, after the contractor costs, will be given to a charity or our choice."

Bath & North East Somerset Council operates its own crematorium at Haycombe, which deals with around 2,000 cremations each year and also recycles unwanted metal body parts.

A spokesman for B&NES said: "The crematorium subscribes to a not-for-profit recycling scheme for all metals recovered from the cremation process.

"Applicants may opt to retain the metals but they must take them away and they cannot be returned afterwards."

Similar metal schemes are already running in the UK, all of which are governed by strict criteria set down by the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematoria.

Councils across the Bristol area are all concentrating on increasing the amount of waste they recycle.

North Somerset Council is currently the top performing unitary authority in the south west and the second best in the country for recycling and recycles 60 per cent of its waste.

Bristol City Council recycles 49 per cent of its waste while B&NES currently recycles 52 per cent.

