Electric cremators can lower carbon emissions by up to 90%, yet just 1% of UK crematoria are using them

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Only around one per cent of UK cremators currently run on electricity, despite electric cremation offering up to 90 per cent lower carbon emissions compared to gas, according to research from the Greater South East Net Zero Hub and the Cremation Society of Great Britain.

Memoria Funeral's parent company, the Memoria Group, operates the UK's largest number of electric cremators. It holds two of the UK's three platinum Greener Globe accreditations, underlining its broader environmental credentials.

It is drawing wider attention to what the sector research shows about the emissions gap between gas and electric cremation. Coverage of 'green' funerals has focused on coffin choice and natural burial, while published sector data points more clearly to the type of cremator used as the biggest single emissions factor in a cremation.

A standard gas-fired UK cremation produces between 62kg and 245kg of CO2 per service, depending on the study consulted. According to the Greater South East Net Zero Hub's Crematoria Decarbonisation Toolkit, published in November 2025, around 99 per cent of UK cremators currently in operation are powered by natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas. The Cremation Society of Great Britain reports that approximately 550,000 cremations take place in the UK every year.

Electric cremators running on green electricity tariffs can reduce the carbon emissions of an individual cremation by around 80 to 90 per cent compared with a conventional gas-fired one. Only about 1 per cent of UK cremators currently run on electricity, according to the Crematoria Decarbonisation Toolkit. Memoria's own operational data shows that approximately 21 per cent of the company's cremators run on electricity across its facilities, roughly 21 times the national average.

Coffin choice adds another complicated layer. Many bamboo coffins, though marketed on their renewable material, are manufactured in Asia and shipped to the UK before cremation, adding shipping emissions to the total. Banana leaf coffins can go sticky when burned at crematorium temperatures, causing operational issues for the equipment. Cardboard coffins can burn away too quickly, forcing the cremator to work harder to maintain the required temperature, and sometimes producing a higher-carbon cremation than a conventional wooden coffin would.

Commenting on the findings, Steve Wallis, CEO of Memoria Funerals, said,

"After 30 years in the funeral sector, I've seen most of the 'eco-friendly' options families are offered. And while some of them have merit, their green credentials are more complicated than the marketing suggests. If you ask most people what the carbon footprint of a cremation is, chances are you'll get a blank look. It usually isn't something we tend to think about, even when we're making careful environmental choices everywhere else in our lives.

“The point isn't to make you feel guilty about a choice you've already made, or one you're going to make. The point is that the conversation about green funerals is, frankly, a mess. Families want to do the right thing, but it isn't always easy to work out how that should look in practice.

"We get one chance to arrange a funeral for someone we love. We can't take it back, we can't exchange it, and we can't do it over again with better information. If the environmental impact matters to you, raise it early. Ask before you sign. The honest version of this conversation is more useful to families than the marketing one, and the funeral sector should be braver about having it."

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