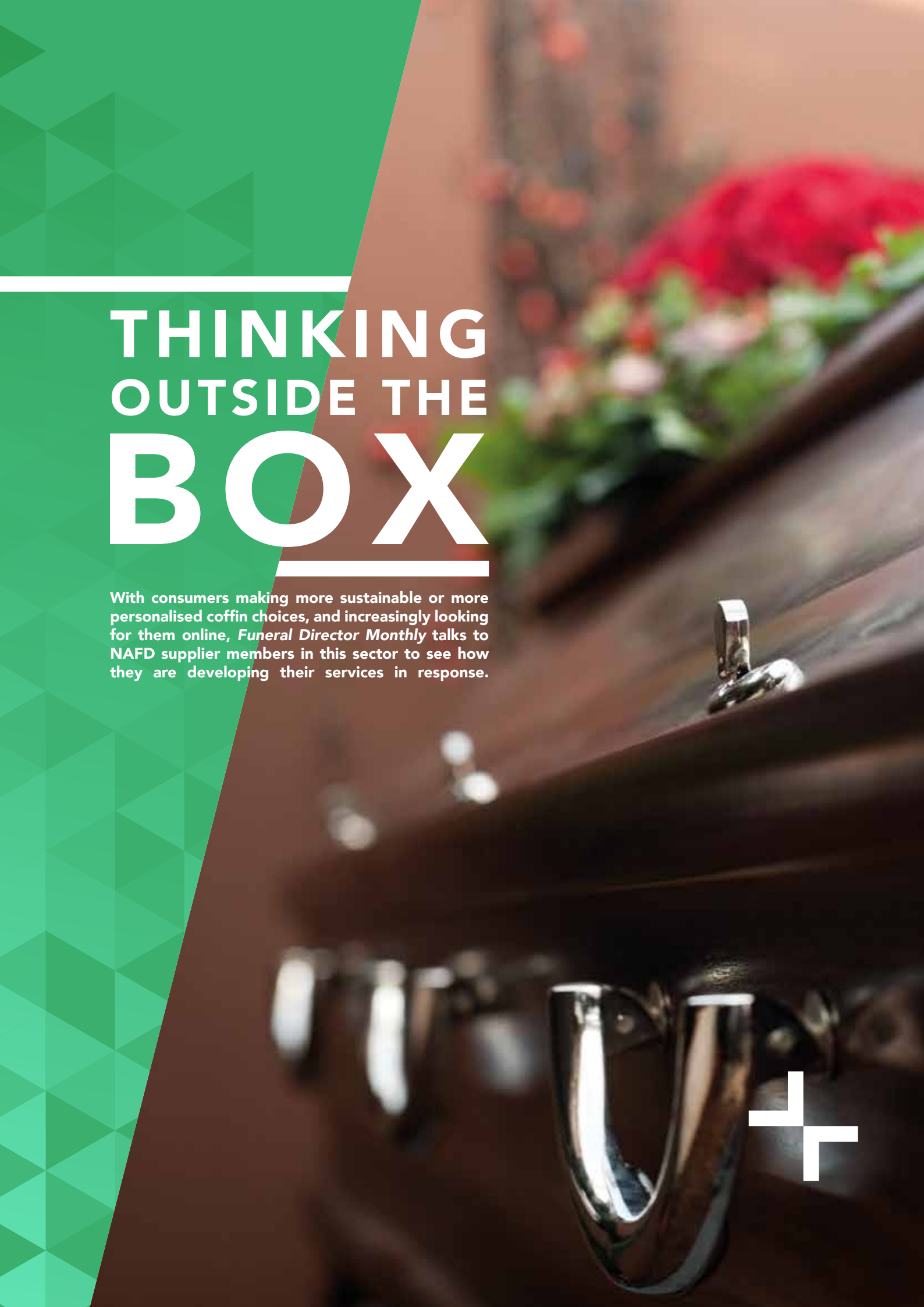




THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

With consumers making more sustainable or more personalised coffin choices, and increasingly looking for them online, *Funeral Director Monthly* talks to NAFD supplier members in this sector to see how they are developing their services in response.



GREENER CHOICES CONTINUE TO DOMINATE – SAYS SOMERSET WILLOW

Somerset Willow has been weaving coffins since 1998. Its coffins are handmade and finished in its Somerset workshops by experienced basket makers using willow grown locally on the Somerset levels. Each of Somerset Willow's coffins can be personalised with coloured banding and handles upon the family's request, and matching crosses, symbols and designs can be woven into the design.

Anthony Hill, a Director of Somerset Willow, said: "The industry has seen many changes over the last twenty years, and many of these changes have been brought about by the need for us all to be less impactful on our environment. Wanting to be more eco-conscious tends to feed into everyday practices, which include the options we choose before we die. I don't believe that the desire to be more eco-conscious will ever peak as such. We will always be looking to try and better our footprint and this ultimately

translates into the choices we make when arranging a loved one's funeral or taking out our own funeral plans.

"The early trend for greener funerals aided the establishment of many alternative products in the industry. Many of these alternative options are now on par with the more traditional choices. I don't think it would be too far-fetched to suggest that alternative products in the industry could eventually become the standard option in the not too distant future.

"Our Somerset willow coffins leave the perfect lasting footprint for the environmentally-conscious individual seeking to have a greener send-off. Willow is a wonderful material that has many ecological attributes, which makes it one of the few truly environmentally-friendly materials available.

"All industries are affected by a diverse array of demands, including political, geographical and social,



and this impacts on the way in which consumers make their choices. I'd find it difficult to believe that in the future, consumers will be caring less about the environment than they do now."

For further information, please contact Somerset Willow on 01278 424003, email enquiries@somersetwillow.co.uk or visit somersetwillow.co.uk.

LIFEART URGES FUNERAL PROFESSION TO HELP CUT COFFIN EMISSIONS

Britain could massively reduce the amount of pollution caused by cremations if more environmentally-friendly materials were used in the construction of coffins, says NAFD member LifeArt Coffins, which manufactures coffins with 'enviroboard' at its state-of-the-art factory in Gloucestershire.

Simon Rothwell, Managing Director of LifeArt Coffins, says: "Currently, around 98% of coffins used in cremation are made from veneered particleboard or MDF, dubbed by some experts as the new 'asbestos'. Independent tests have revealed that, switching from MDF or particleboard coffins to new paper-based products, could reduce

these greenhouse gas emissions and toxic particles, including CO² and NO_x, by up to 97%.

Currently, there are around 450,000 cremations in the UK each year, which leads to the burning of around 17 million kg of MDF or particleboard, causing a significant amount of pollution.



Says Simon: "NOx is a serious greenhouse gas pollutant and is produced during all forms of combustion through the burning of nitrogen-bearing materials at high temperature. The more nitrogen present, the higher the levels of NOx produced. In cremations, a significant amount of nitrogen comes directly from the materials from which the coffin is manufactured, and there are very high levels found in MDF, particleboard and chipboard materials. The complete combustion of a typical cremation produces the same levels of NOx as a car travelling 3,650 km (2,268) or Barcelona to Moscow. The simplest, and one of the most effective ways to significantly reduce the production of NOx and to help reduce air pollution is to cremate less of these types of coffins and to use materials that are proven to reduce NOx emissions. Toxic air is responsible for 400,000 premature deaths across Europe each year and there is a growing focus on NOx reduction throughout governments across Europe and in the UK. We see our responsibility to the death care industry to do whatever is necessary to reduce the cremation of harmful materials for the benefit of our local communities and ultimately safeguard our planet."

Results of cremation tests, which were conducted by the UK's largest cremator manufacturer, Leeds-based Facultatieve Technologies, were released in the wake of the Government's recent announcement on its 'Clean Air Strategy', which included measures to crack down on

polluting fuels, including those used in wood-burning stoves and diesel engines.

Many crematoria are located in busy towns already suffering from pollution and, although some modern cremators have advanced pollution-abatement technology, they are unable to retard all greenhouse gases effectively. NOx cannot currently be abated and is seen as one of the main causes of current poor air quality in cities.

Simon added that the funeral profession could play an important part in doing its bit to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save trees. "Our tests reinforce the fact that burning chipboard coffins is environmentally harmful and doing it on the scale that we are through cremations in the UK makes little sense.

"There have been paper-based coffins on the market for many years but chipboard coffins have continued to dominate because until now it has been impossible to replicate the look, functionality and low cost of a veneered chipboard coffin," Simon said.

So far, LifeArt coffins has been adopted by a number of Co-op funeral directors as part of their commitment to reducing their carbon footprints. This includes Lincolnshire Co-op, an independent Co-op based in Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties. It runs 21 funeral homes and arrangement offices, and South Lincolnshire Crematorium.

David Dernley, Head of Funerals at Lincolnshire Co-op, said: "At most funeral homes families have to pay twice as much for an eco-coffin compared to veneered chipboard. We are proud to be one of the first to provide affordable environmentally-friendly wood-effect coffins for our families, as this fits with Lincolnshire Co-op's purpose and approach. We don't want bereaved families having to pay a premium to protect the environment.

"The other great thing about this new technology is that, whilst it is capable of producing a high-quality traditional wood effect, we are also able to produce high definition picture coffins that allow families to reflect the life of the person whilst again still protecting the environment."

According to LifeArt's research, in addition to emitting more greenhouse gases MDF and particleboard coffins require a large amount of wood. Each year, in the region of 330,000 trees are felled to produce coffins, many of which are burned in cremators. Concludes Simon: "To produce the same number of coffins using recycled and FSC-approved paper-based materials 80% fewer trees would be required, saving a staggering 273,000 trees."

For further information, please contact Simon Rothwell on 07527 769 608, email simonr@lifeart.com or visit www.lifeart.com.

SEEING DOUBLE IN JC ATKINSON'S NEW REFLECTIONS CATALOGUE

JC Atkinson, manufacturer of environmentally-sustainable coffins and caskets, is launching a brand new catalogue for its Reflections® picture coffins range, and has doubled the number of designs on offer.

As more and more people opt for a picture coffin, the range has grown to meet the need and now includes not only new designs, such as the Deep Blue Sea coffin, but a whole new category as well.

Whereas before, families could choose between either a bespoke or an established design, the innovative company now offers a blend of the two - an established base design which can be added to, and personalised with, photos.

Jamie Luckley, who heads up the design studio at the third generation family business, explains: "Everyone in life is unique and we believe that a picture coffin should reflect that individuality. That's why we

now offer not only a greater range of designs, but also a service for those who want a unique picture coffin but find having a background image to work from a helpful start. Whatever people choose, the design team is on hand to walk them through a fully personalised service and create a piece of art to celebrate the life remembered."

Also featured in the brochure for the first time is the award-winning Pathway® coffin. Unlike any other coffin on the market, the Pathway® has eight separate side panels that can be shared amongst family and friends to design or decorate in whatever way they each feel most suitably honours the life of their loved one. It can be done online, so people can either get together or submit their ideas separately from wherever they are in the world. What's more, the Pathway® panels can be

created from a range of materials such as soft tactile fabric or clean printed panels and finished with either a blackboard, whiteboard or corkboard lid allowing an even wider circle of friends and family to write or pin memories and messages.

Completing the range, JC Atkinson now offers a choice of printed coffin fabric interiors in a range of beautiful designs and every one of its picture coffins is biodegradable and FSC certified, an environmental standard customers have come to expect of the business.

For further information, please contact info@jcatkinson.co.uk, call JC Atkinson's sales team on 0191 415 1516 or visit www.picturecoffins.co.uk.

