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Go green — even when you're dead!

An Oxford coffin company is donating money to green causes after working out the carbon footprint of cremations.

Colourful Coffins, based in Oxford, has worked out that 215 kilograms of carbon dioxide is emitted when an average body is cremated. That equates to 520 tonnes a year in Oxford and so it is voluntarily making a donation to cut the carbon footprint.

Mary Tomes, managing director of Colourful Coffins, said: "We feel very strongly that we should do everything we can to adopt a green approach within the funeral market and feedback shows it is something our customers care about too. We already use paper-based wraps and environmentally-friendly inks.

"This agreement underlines the fact we take our commitment to the green agenda very seriously and we are pleased to be setting an example to our industry."

Ms Tomes believes the company is the first in the industry to take this green route, with the money going to Oxford-based offsetting specialist Climate Care.

With every cremation, the same amount of CO₂ is produced as burning ten litres of fuel in a car, and 70 per cent of the 550,000 funerals in the UK a year are cremations.

Last year, 2,419 cremations were carried out at the Oxford Crematorium.

Crematorium spokesman Amanda Grant said emissions were strictly monitored and independently vetted.

About £2.50 from every coffin

will be used by Climate Care on a range of projects around the world, ranging from building wind turbines to restoring forests.

Managing director David Wellington said: "Colourful Coffins should be congratulated for providing a greener cremation option — everyone who respects the planet will want their leaving of it to reflect that."

The move has been welcomed by Craig Simmons, leader of the Green Party in Oxford.

He said: "I think it is important that people take their environmental responsibilities seriously from the cradle to the grave and the first step is to reduce emissions."

Colourful Coffins was set up by Ms Tomes in 2003 and specialises in producing caskets that can carry any design to order.



Mary Tomes with one of her colourful coffins