
Memorial Maintenance Policy

Whilst the maintenance and insurance of a memorial is the responsibility of the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial the parish council has an obligation under Health and Safety at Work Act and Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure the safety of all visitors to the cemetery and as such must undertake routine testing of memorial safety¹.

The core of the council's memorial safety testing is a rolling programme of inspections to ensure all memorials are inspected every five years. This policy sets out what the council will do when it identifies a memorial is unsafe.

A dangerous or unstable memorial is defined as one that will move and continue to fall to the ground with the exertion of a force of 25kg or less.

Memorial Inspections

The council will undertake routine memorial inspections annually.

The council will also undertake inspections on the memorials surrounding a grave when it is being prepared for opening.

Before undertaking a memorial inspection, the inspector shall have received suitable training.

For memorials between 500mm and 1500mm tall, the inspection will comprise a visual inspection and a hand test in line with ICCM guidance.

For memorials over 1500mm tall (or for complex structures) a hand test may not be appropriate, and if a visual inspection suggests potential issues with a memorial an external structural survey or inspection by a memorial mason will be required.

Each memorial shall be assigned to one of three categories:

- Priority (P1) – immediate action is required
- Priority 2 (P2) – annual reinspection is required
- Priority 3 (P3) – quinquennial reinspection is required

A written record of inspections shall be kept detailing:

1. Section and Grave Number
2. Name on memorial
3. Priority Category
4. Date of inspection
5. Name of inspector

¹ The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 – Article 3 – a burial authority may do such things as they consider necessary or desirable for the proper management, regulation and control of a cemetery.

6. Explanation of failure for P1 and P2 memorials
7. Name of mason (if visible) for P1 and P2 memorials
8. A photographic record shall be taken of all P1 and P2 memorials

Communications

The council will announce the commencement of its routine memorial inspections programme on the council website, on the council's social media and a notice put up in the parish noticeboard which is located at the Post Office.

A sign will be placed at the entrance to the cemetery stating that routine inspections are taking place, and this will be removed once the families of all P1 memorials have been written to.

Inspection Categories

Priority 1

Priority 1 (P1) memorial is an immediate danger to the public and must be immediately made safe.

On identifying a P1 memorial the inspector shall immediately do one of the following to make the area safe:

- a. Install a stake and banding to prevent the memorial falling
- b. Securely cordon off the area to prevent the public accessing the memorial
- c. Lay the memorial (or part thereof) flat

A notice will be installed on the memorial advising the owner to contact the council to discuss the failure.

Where memorials have been inscribed in the last 30 years, the council will write to the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial at the last known address to advise:

- the memorial has failed an inspection
- what immediate action has been taken
- what further action is required and the timescale for doing so

The rights holder may contract their own mason to undertake the repair, and this will follow the process for approval of works to a memorial, ensuring that all repairs comply with British Standards BS8415.

If the repair is not undertaken within six months from notification, the council may fund the repair to the memorial and this cost must then be repaid to the council before the Exclusive Right of Burial is further exercised.

The repair will either be to:

- Bring the memorial to the current BS415 specification
- Bury the bottom 1/3 of the memorial

- Embed the headstone flat within the grave Or such other works as considered necessary which may include (as a matter of last resort) the removal of the memorial.

Priority 2

Priority 2 (P2) memorial is not an immediate danger to the public but is not fully stable.

Memorials may also be classified as P2 if their position, construction of material suggests a more frequent inspection should be undertaken.

All P2 memorials shall be inspected annually.

Priority 3

A Priority 3 (P3) memorial is one that is perfectly stable or below 500mm in height.

P3 memorials shall be reinspected quinquennially