

MEMORIAL SAFETY POLICY

Background

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act the Parish Council has an overriding responsibility to ensure as far as reasonably practicable the safety of the burial ground and closed churchyard that it is responsible for, this includes the identification and control of hazards from unstable memorials.

Through this policy and its actions the Parish Council will seek to balance the risk of injury from unstable memorials with the sensitivities of carrying out works in the burial ground and closed churchyard.

The memorial owner, or successor in title, has the ultimate responsibility to maintain it so as not to present a hazard to themselves, members of the public or council staff, and as such are therefore responsible and liable for all expenditure incurred to make safe their memorial in the event that their memorial is found to be unsafe or dangerous condition. This is not the responsibility of the council.

Memorial Inspection

One month prior to inspection, the Parish Council will notify all existing memorial owners on the Council's proposals to carry out safety checks on memorials and advise them of any implications that may arise. This will be done by placing notices at the burial ground and closed churchyard, in the village newsletter, on the Council's website and social media pages.

The Parish Council will risk assess and inspect all memorials in accordance with guidelines issued by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM).

The inspection programme will consist of 3 elements: (a) the initial inspection and testing of memorials; (b) immediate and temporary stabilisation of unsafe memorials; and (c) the repair/making safe of memorials which have been stabilised temporarily.

Memorials will be inspected based on 3 categories and will be tested in accordance with the Memorial Testing Policy in Appendix A:

Category 1 memorials

Memorials up to 24 inches/610mm in height will first be visually inspected and then will be physically checked to ensure that all joints are sound and that the memorial is stable on its plinth. Memorials in this category are not to be used to lean against or act as leverage when standing up from a kneeling position.

Make safe - category 1 memorials

- Temporary strapping to post with notice (for one year maximum) or laying flat if temporary strapping is not suitable.
- Notify grave deed holder where possible.

Category 2 memorials

Memorials above 24 inches/610mm but not exceeding 78 inches/1980mm in height will first be inspected visually and then hand tested as per the training received by the ICCM.

Make safe - category 2 memorials

- Temporary strapping to post with notice (for one year maximum) or laying flat if temporary strapping not suitable
- Notify grave deed holder where possible

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- The council needs to ascertain what memorials are of social, architectural and historic value and the impact on the character of the cemeteries making safe will have.

Category 3 memorials

Memorials above 78 inches/1980mm in height will be first visually checked and if no problems are noted then no further action is required; however, if a memorial is deemed unsafe then a further check will be carried out by a suitably qualified person such as a structural surveyor. The cost of this will be the responsibility of the grave deed holder.

Make safe - category 3 memorials

- Cordoning off, for larger memorials category 3, that fail the visual test. The cordon will need to cover the fall radius of the highest point of the memorial and not just the memorial itself.
- Notify grave deed holder where possible.

Action after making safe

The responsibility for maintaining a memorial in a safe condition is that of the grave owner. Individual owners contacted following the identification of unstable memorials will be offered the opportunity to rectify any identified problems. Owners will be required to ensure all repairs are carried out by an approved mason, in accordance with the National Association of Memorial Masons Code of Practice and as provided in British Standard, BS 8415. Owners will be offered ten weeks to respond.

If no response or a negative response is received from the owner of any memorials, the Council will take a decision as to how the memorial shall be made safe permanently. In doing so, the Council will consider repairing the memorial at the Council's cost subject to funds being available, re-fixing it in a safe manner (e.g. using a monolith system for headstones), laying it flat or removing it.

Appendix A – Memorial Testing Policy

The Parish Councillors and / or employees will conduct the memorial testing in accordance with the following guidance. Any company contracted by the Parish Council to carry out inspections on its behalf will be required to comply with the guidance set out below as provided by the ICCM. Companies will be required to provide their own risk assessments and method statements for approval prior to engaging in any work.

Inspectors will be required to wear suitable clothing and sturdy footwear prior to undertaking the memorial testing.

Generic Memorial Stability Test

- Initial visual inspection will be undertaken from a safe distance from the memorial while the names and details of the memorial and those interred are recorded.
- If the memorial passes the visual inspection, the memorial will be assessed and approached from the front or a direction that will not place the inspector in danger if the memorial moves.
- Inspectors will check the joints for any visible cracking which may indicate instability.
- Memorials will receive an initial hand test inspection to establish general stability of the memorial. The physical hand test shall only take place following a visual inspection.

The following additional actions will be carried out as set out below:

Kerbs

Kerbs will be inspected, by hand, for stability and secure fitting.

Plinths/Lawn Memorials

Memorials shall be inspected to ensure they are in sound condition and for any trip hazards.

Vases

Vases will be inspected by hand for secure fitting.

Inspection Records

Every memorial must be inspected and a record made of the inspection. Records should include information that will assist in locating memorials in future inspections, information on the visual, hand tests, and an assessment of the priority and action to be taken.

Condition categories

The memorial safety policy is based on a risk assessment approach. Following the inspection, each memorial will be assigned to one of four categories, as set out below:

Category	Condition	Action
1	Unstable and requires immediate attention and temporary stabilisation is considered inappropriate or unfeasible.	In extreme circumstances of immediate danger to the public or persons working in the burial ground, the memorial will be laid down.
2	Unstable and requires immediate attention.	The memorial will be temporarily stabilised. Care will be taken making sure that no damage is caused to the memorial and all actions will be recorded. A notice will be displayed on / near the memorial warning / advising of its unstable condition.

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3	Stable and requires no immediate attention though will require re-inspection prior to next proposed inspection in no more than five years time.	All actions to be recorded and a recommendation will be given on the time scale for re-inspection.
4	Stable and requires no attention.	All actions recorded will be re-inspected in no more than five years time.

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Appendix B – Inspection Form

PLOT NUMBER / LOCATION
NAMES ON MEMORIAL
VISUAL INSPECTION, any damage to the memorial, cracks along joints etc. Also note any ground conditions that need rectifying, eg sunken graves.
TOPPLE TEST, standing in front of the memorial place hand on top of memorial and gradually exert pressure. Assess whether the memorial is stable, wobbles slightly but firm in ground, or likely to topple over.
CONDITION CATEGORY
IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN
RECOMMENDATIONS
INSPECTED BY:
DATE: