



South
Derbyshire
District Council

Memorial Safety Policy

Cultural Services
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Background

This policy has been produced to set out South Derbyshire District Council's (the Council) position with regard to memorial safety, the responsibilities of the Council, its contractors, memorial masons and Grant of Right Holders as well as the actions that will be taken to minimise risk to the users of Council-managed cemeteries across the district.

Since Victorian times memorials have been erected on graves as a permanent reminder of those buried within. It is often wrongly assumed that memorials are permanent structures, installed to the highest standards, and will last forever without any need for repair.

Unfortunately, this assumption has cost the lives of six people nationally in recent years, most of whom have been children, and there have been countless accidents ranging from bruising to severe crush injuries and bone breakages. Local authorities have to tackle years of neglect and in some cases poor workmanship. Yet the memorials do not belong to the Council; they remain the property of the person/s that has been granted the Exclusive Rights of Burial.

Responsibilities for Memorial Safety

The following parties have responsibility for memorial safety in Council-managed cemeteries:

- **The Council** has health and safety responsibilities to its employees, contractors and visitors to cemeteries. The Council has a responsibility to staff (Section 2 Health & Safety at Work Act 1974) and a responsibility to visitors (Section 3 Health & safety at Work Act 1974). The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a legal duty on the Council to assess the risks from cemetery structures and work activities and ensure the risks are controlled.
- **A monumental mason** has the responsibility to work in accordance with the Council's conditions and specification s for memorials as laid down in the Cemeteries' Regulations and in accordance with current standards available within the industry i.e. British Standard 8415, The National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Code of Working Practice and the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons 'Blue Book'.
- **An owner**, the Grant of Right holder (or successor in title) of a memorial has the responsibility to maintain it so as not to present a hazard.

Notice of Intent

Prior to any memorials being inspected, reasonable steps will be taken by the Council to inform grave owners, Grant of Right holders, and members of the public of the intention to inspect memorials and remove the danger from unsafe memorials.

This will involve:

- Giving advance general notice in a local newspaper at least 28 days in advance of any inspection regime commencing, and/or
- Making media announcements giving details of the assessment locations and methodology at least 28 days prior to the commencement of any inspections.
- Publishing details of the assessment and methodology on the Council's website.
- Placing public notices in prominent locations in the cemetery affected by the assessment regime.

Assessment Process

The Council will risk assess and test memorials in accordance with the principles issued by the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management.

Due to the number of memorials within Council-managed cemeteries, testing will be undertaken as part of a five year rolling programme, the schedule of which can be seen in the table below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Cemetery	Church Gresley – Section 4	Church Gresley – All remaining sections	Newhall	Marston-on-Dove, Etwall, Findern & Aston-on-Trent	

Faculties will be applied for in advance from the Diocese of Derby, where required, seeking authorisation for testing to be undertaken on consecrated land.

The safety assessment is to test whether memorials can withstand a reasonable hand force. This force has been arrived at scientifically and replicates the force of a person falling, pushing or pulling against a memorial.

Initial visual warning signs of memorial instability are as follows:

- Movement 5 degrees from vertical
- Cracks in headstone or base
- Movement if rocked
- Ground settlement
- Waterlogged ground
- Missing parts

Reasons for memorial instability include:

- Accidental damage
- Animal activity (e.g. burrowing by rabbits, moles, foxes etc.)
- Insect activity (e.g. ants nests)
- Encroaching tree roots
- Inadequate fixings
- Inferior materials
- Lack of maintenance
- Poor workmanship
- Subsidence
- Vandalism
- Weather/storm damage
- Decay through aging
- Weed killer chemicals

Safety assessments will only be undertaken by either fully trained in-house staff or external contractors who can show they have the training and required knowledge to undertake the testing.

After undergoing the testing process, memorials will be classified into three categories.

Category 1 – Requires immediate action. The memorials within this classification have been made safe by either staking and/or signage dependant on location within the cemetery. A memorial may be laid flat within the grave space where danger is acute and immediate and there is no other way of making safe. Laying flat may only be done as a last resort and inscription must be left visible.

Category 2 – Repair within six months. The memorials within this classification require remedial works within six months to ensure their long term safety. These include kerb and corners loose on kerbs, where there is movement of the memorial but passed the calibrated test. Also within this section are memorials that show movement/joints failed but lock during the inspection indicating an ‘earth anchor’ may be installed. These memorials require attention to ensure they comply with The National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Code of Working Practice where all joints should be secure.

Category 3 – Pass. The memorials within this classification are considered to be stable and not dangerous in any way and are to be reassessed in five years.

Any memorial found to be unsafe whether staked or not will have a warning notice attached explaining the situation.

Methodology

Stability Test

All memorials will initially undergo a visual inspection from safe distance whilst the names and details of the 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.

An initial fingertip test will be undertaken to establish stability of the memorial.

A hand test as instructed by the Ministry of Justice Guidance (MoJ), National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) and Institute of Cemeteries & Crematorium Management (ICCM) will be carried out to confirm stability.

Calibrated force measurement equipment, if appropriate, will be utilised on memorials including failed memorials to confirm and record a calibrated pressure reading of memorials to provide supporting evidence of failure.

The inspection will be carried out front to rear for standard memorials. Crosses and other obelisk style memorials will be tested from four directions using calibrated equipment.

Additionally kerb sets will be inspected by hand for secure fitting.

Records are to be updated at each stage.

Pitch Measurement

Following the stability testing of a memorial, at either 1 metre above ground level or the top of the memorial (whichever is the lowest) a measure of the lean will be undertaken. This will be by measuring the angle in degrees from front/back and side to side angles with calibrated equipment. Only angles of 3 degrees and over will be recorded.

At each stage records will be updated and recorded.

Memorials over 2.5 Metres High

The memorial will be inspected as per the stability and pitch test although only a visual inspection will be carried out on these memorials.

Again at each stage records will be updated. A separate report will be specifically generated regarding memorials over 2.5 meters in height.

Remedial Action

Due to the layout of the various cemeteries the risk of injury is relatively low, so make safe will be with the application of signs to warn owners and the public of unsafe memorials. Any memorial in high risk area, namely within the first two rows adjacent to a pathway will be staked. The laying down of a memorial will only be undertaken as a last resort.

Documentation & Recording

Memorial assessments will be noted on record sheets or hand-held digital devices. The information taken from the records will then be transferred to a computer database for long-term reference and security. (See image below.)

number	1143	grave type	1	Stone Mason	1
Inspection Date	17/11/2014	grave Type	<1m headstone	Stone Mason:	unknown
first name 1	Margaret	Material type	2	Photo Number	1143
surname 1	Hulme	Material type	Marble	photo	DSCF5714.JPG
death 1	06/09/1938	grave condition	1		
first name 2		recommendations	No action required		
surname 2		Action taken	No Action Required		
death 2		Topkg KG	25		
Grave Section	5	No/LMeter:	0		
Grave Section:	Consecrated drive	front/rear pitch	0		
Grave No	001	side pitch	0		
Comments					

Notification, Repair and Re-fixing

Where a memorial has been identified as being unsafe and action taken to remove the immediate danger, the following actions as a minimum will be taken:

- Lists of failed memorials will be published on the Council's Website, www.south-derbys.gov.uk
- Detailed lists of failed memorials will also be available for viewing at the Council's Civic Offices, Swadlincote.
- A warning notice will be displayed and attached to any memorial that has been assessed as dangerous. Notices offering advice and contact information will be displayed in all Cemetery noticeboards.

In addition, where details of the Grant of Right holder are readily available a letter will be sent explaining the assessment process and the options available to them.

Where a grave owner cannot be traced and it is felt that the memorial is of historic significance or its maintenance is important to preserve the character or ambience of the Cemetery, the Council will consider carrying out the repairs subject to funds being available.

All repairs/re-fixings must comply with relevant industry guidance.

Future Installations

Although some deterioration to stonework, foundations and fixings due to weathering and the passage of time is inevitable, the Council requires that in order to minimise these effects for all future installations memorial masons adhere to the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Code of Working Practice. This includes the use of appropriate foundations and fixings or other suitably approved and secure traditional methods for the installation of stone memorials as well as the relevant Cemetery Regulations currently in force.

Grant of Right Holders

The assessment process may be upsetting for Grant of Right Holders and visiting families. South Derbyshire District Council regrets any distress that it may cause. It is better that the memorial is assessed rather than it is left to pose a potential danger to others.

If a memorial has to be made safe Grant of Right holders can choose to either:

Have the memorial repaired; Grant of Right Holders will need to arrange the necessary remedial work with a memorial mason, for which the mason is likely to charge a fee. The Cemeteries Officer can supply a list of memorial masons if one is required. These memorial masons should undertake the repair to a minimum standard as recommended by the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) or equivalent.

Take no further action; if a stake has been used to support the memorial it is considered to be safe. The stake may be replaced to re-stabilise the memorial during further assessment in the next cycle of assessments to stabilise it. If the memorial has been laid flat this action will have been taken as a last resort. Once a memorial has been laid flat it is considered to be safe.

No attempt should be made to repair or remove any memorial except by a properly qualified memorial mason.

Points of Contact

Any concerns or questions about the memorial safety assessment process should be referred to the Cemeteries & Services Officer through one of the methods below:

E-Mail: cemeteries@south-derbys.gov.uk

Phone: 01283 595782

Fax: 01283 595720

Write: Cemeteries & Services Officer
South Derbyshire District Council
Civic Offices
Civic Way
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE11 0AH

Obtaining alternative versions of this document

If you would like this document in another language, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us. This information is also available in large print, Braille or audio format upon request.

Phone: 01283 595795

email:customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

Jeśli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub potrzebują Państwo usług tłumacza, prosimy o kontakt. Informacje te są również dostępne na życzenie w wydaniu dużym drukiem, w alfabetie braila lub w wersji audio.

如果你需要这份文件的中文翻译·或者需要传译员的帮助·请联系我们。这些数据也备有大字体印本·盲人点字和录音带·欢迎索取·

ほかの言語でこの文書をご希望の場合、もしくは通訳サービスをご希望の場合はご連絡ください。

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ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਸਰੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੁਆਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮਿਗਿ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬ੍ਰੇਅਲ ਜਾਂ ਆਡਿਓ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲੱਬਧ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

اگر آپ یہ ایک منٹ کسی اور زبان میں چاہتے ہوں، یا اگر آپ کسی تر جان کی خدمات درکار ہوں، تو براہ کرم ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔ درخواست کرنے پر معلومات بڑے پنٹ، بریل یا آڈیوفارਮیٹ میں بھی دستیاب ہیں۔



for South Derbyshire

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Civic Offices Civic Way Swadlincote Derbyshire DE11 0AH

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