

East Ayrshire Council submission of 8 December 2022

PE1941/G: Stop the destruction of headstones within community cemeteries

Lair owners

We recognise that the responsibility for the headstone falls to the lair owner and as such I can advise that we will log owner details at time of purchase of lair and as part of process ask families to inform us of any updates.

Over the years we recognise that these details in some instances may not be accurate. We will use all available information we have on record to make contact via letter or telephone call with a family member, this sometimes is not possible due many reasons and in these circumstances we will follow our current process to ensure that the headstone is made safe.

As part of our inspection programme we put up signage informing cemetery users that we are carrying out this work and provide contact details if they have any questions.

We also sticker any headstones providing our contact details so that we can assist with any questions or advise as to who they should contact for a quote to repair and make safe.

We fully understand the distress this may cause bereaved families and when considering options we do this ensuring it creates the least discomfort for these families keeping in mind the responsibility we have to ensure our cemeteries and churchyards are safe places for people to visit.

Background East Ayrshire council

Since 2002 East Ayrshire council have had an inspection programme in place to inspect memorials within a five year period. This was the guidance at the time from the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematoria (ICCM).

Since January 2003 the council insist that only Memorial Masons / Memorial fixers who comply with the BS 8415, National Association of

Memorial Masons (NAMM) and British Register of Memorial Masons (BRAMM) will be permitted to erect memorial in East Ayrshire Cemeteries. The council also train employees to these standards to ensure memorial inspections are carried out in line with current industry standards.

Memorial inspection process

Around 2002/3 we reviewed our process as the process of laying flat created issues publicly and we listened to the feedback and decided that stake and tie was a more suitable and acceptable process where possible.

Memorials identified as CAT1 are made safe by staking and banding. This is simply hammering a wooden stake into the ground and using a plastic tape to band the memorial to the wooden stake to ensure stability. If a CAT1 memorial is too big and not suitable for stake and banding we can lay flat, sheugh (ditch in) and lean against the base or cordon off with a barrier (tape or fence).

Since 2003 we have made safe many large memorials, throughout East Ayrshire, by sheughing and also removing heavy ornamental urns, ornaments' that adorn the top of old, large memorials and sectioned memorials that could become loose from the top. This was carried out, where large memorials are found, in all old sections of our cemeteries as well as all churchyards.

Since 1998 the council has installed concrete foundations to NAMM standards when we extend cemeteries.

In 2003 the council insisted that all memorial were fixed to NAMM standard concrete foundations using stainless steel threaded rods as per NAMM standard fixing methods. These fixing methods mean that a memorial cannot become unsafe as the tolerances between the dowel holes and the dowel are such that the memorial, if no cement was present in the joints, could be pushed back but would lodge against the dowel and not fall over.

Prior to 2003 Memorial Masons secured the memorial to the foundation with mortar alone and this is where many of CAT 1 memorials stem from. Memorial Masons also installed their own foundations prior to 1998 when the council took control of foundations and charged a fee for installing concrete foundations to NAMM standards. The old foundations installed by others – pre 1998 - are often poor quality and not fit for purpose. This combined with the memorial only being fixed by a thin

layer of cement mortar leads to many memorials failing safety inspections and being identified as CAT1.

Old foundations often consist of building bricks which are not suitable and do not comply with standards as they deteriorate and break up over time.

The memorial owner is responsible for any repairs to the memorial or to have the memorial re-erected this includes the foundation if not installed by EAC pre 1998. The council started to install memorial foundations in 1998. Prior to 1998 foundations were installed by memorial masons but we have found that many of these are not fit for purpose and require to be replaced. New foundations will be paid for by memorial owners unless the foundation was installed after 1998 and the council has made a charge for the foundation.

The council install all memorial foundations to ensure the BS 8415 is adhered to.

We continue to provide training to staff across our portfolio to ensure we have employees who can assist with inspections and works to make headstones safe.

I hope this information assists and if you require any further info please let me know.