

East Dunbartonshire Council submission of 14 December 2022

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

I refer to your recent request on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in respect of the petition [PE1941 Stop the destruction of headstones within community cemeteries | Scottish Parliament Website](#).

I can advise that East Dunbartonshire Council take cognisance of the Burial Ground Memorial Safety Guidance issued by Scottish Government in June 2019 for Scotland's Local Authorities and updated our own internal Headstone and Memorial Inspection Policy accordingly.



burial-ground-memo
rial-safety-guidance-s

As noted by the Committee the burial grounds are the responsibility of the Local Authority, but the lair and associated headstone/memorial is the responsibility of the lair owner. The Council as the Burial Authority does inspect and endeavour to contact owners if there is any concerns regarding the safety of a headstone, highlighting that that the issue should be addressed by the owner via a trained Monumental Mason that is registered to work within East Dunbartonshire Cemeteries.

The Cemetery Management Rules state -

- *Foundations for all memorials shall be constructed in accordance with such recommendations as may be formulated from time to time by the National Association of Monumental of Monumental Masons.*
- *The lairholder shall keep the memorial in a proper state of repair, of which the Appropriate Officer shall be the sole judge. Failing attention to this requirement within twenty one days after written notice to the lair holder at their last known address, the Council shall be entitled at the lair holder's expense to either repair the memorial or have it*

removed and until the cost of such repair or removal is paid the right to use the lair shall be withheld. No planting of any nature (including trees, shrubs, bulbs, herbaceous and annual plants, etc.) shall take place on a lair.

In the event that an owner cannot be contacted then the Service is under an obligation to make the headstone safe, by either fencing it off or laying it flat on the ground until such times as the owner or next of kin could be contacted. I am pleased to say this is a very rare occurrence so the description of "destruction of headstones within community cemeteries" is not one I recognise or would use to describe the cemeteries or work undertaken within East Dunbartonshire. Any work to make the cemetery safe is undertaken in a careful and respectful manner, with every effort made to contact the lair owner in the first instance and in line with the appropriate guidance.

I would also advise that the Bereavement Team do have a modest budget for Headstone Repairs and have occasionally undertaken repairs if the ownership cannot be confirmed and if the headstone/memorial is deemed as historically significant or relevant to the location. A recent example would be the repairs and renovation of the Beatrice Clugston Memorial in Old Aisle Cemetery, Kirkintilloch.

I trust this information is of assistance.