

Angus Council submission of 15 December 2022

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

Angus Council recognizes its statutory obligation to ensure the safety of our staff and those visiting our cemeteries and churchyards.

With responsibility for 75 burial grounds, we inspect all memorial headstones at least once every five years, with any problems in the interim highlighted by inspectors and staff. Any found to be requiring attention are dealt with in our rolling annual headstone stabilisation programme.

Each year we publish notices on cemetery notice boards and on cemetery gates giving notice of headstones requiring attention and inviting lair holders to contact us. Following this notice period, we will then 'make safe' all headstones requiring attention following Scottish Government issued guidance and as agreed with The Scottish Burial Bereavement Group of which Angus Council is a contributor.

The responsibility for memorial safety represents a significant undertaking for all Scottish Authorities and whilst the widespread publication of our inspection and maintenance programme does, on occasion, bring a responsible lair holder to our attention this is quite rare and for most unsafe headstones we identify no surviving lair holders are ever traced.

To confirm, Angus Council believes we make every effort to inform and consult with lair holders before repairing or making safe dangerous headstones and currently have no immediate plans to change existing procedures.