

Renfrewshire Council submission of 21 December 2022

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

In relation to the Memorial Safety Inspection Programme, the Council advised lair holders via local press and social media prior to the inspection works commencing. In addition to this a communication there was an appeal via local press and social media asking for lair holders to update lair details.

Following the press and social media releases, information signage was then placed in the individual cemeteries prior to commencing the inspection programme and then throughout the programme.

The Council also advises appropriate elected members in advance of the inspection programme for the cemeteries within their local ward area.

If a maintenance issue is identified at the time of the inspection, then an advisory notice is left at the lair with contact details to allow the lair holder to contact us for further advice.

If the headstone is found to be an immediate risk and is laid flat, then an advisory notice is left at the lair with contact details in order that the lair holder can contact us discuss the reasons for this.

The inspection programme and communication exercise are carried out in a sensitive manner and staff will communicate with the lair holder in the most appropriate way and includes a face-to-face meeting on site if requested or deemed the most appropriate.

A proportion of lair holders have engaged with us following advisory notes left at the lair and to date we have received applications to re-erect headstones where they had been laid flat.

To be clear no headstones are moved from the area of the lair.

Staff are trained to carry out safety inspections determining one of the 3 outcomes explained in previous section. They upload pictures of the headstone before and after inspection and comments of findings to our database. This is accessible to the staff who take the phone calls from

lair holders. We have found that most callers are understanding when the reasoning is explained.

When communicating with lair holders out with the memorial safety programme, we write out to lair holder at the address provided on our database regarding any health and safety issue. If no response is received, we would leave information at the lair asking for lair holder to contact us. If no response is received, we make decision on any works required on case-by-case basis.

As referenced by the Committee, it can be difficult to identify lair owners due to lost or out-of-date contact details. Whilst we recognise the benefit of individually contacting all lair holders, our conclusion was that this would not adequately achieve objective.

In summary, we do not contact individual lair holders before or after inspection. This has been carefully and sensitively considered and we have benchmarked this decision with other Scottish Local Authorities via advisory groups and industry communications.

The Council has a dedicated administrative resource and council officer allocated to memorial safety.