

MEMORIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

Reviewed April 2023

Recreation & Amenities (minute R405)

Background

The Health and Safety Executive require regular memorial safety inspections following a number of accidents across the country. We have a duty of care for the safety of families, visitors and staff visiting. As part of a rolling program, the council will endeavour to inspect all memorials at least once every three years.

Policy Scope

This Memorial Management Policy sets out the actions the Council will take to ensure Albert Road Cemetery remains a safe place for visitors, contractors, volunteers, Councillors and HETC staff. The order of works to be carried out will be determined by a site-based risk assessment, carried out on a rolling three-year cycle.

Who is responsible for memorial headstones?

All memorials are owned by and are the responsibility of the grave owner(s) or their next of kin, during the term of the deed of exclusive right and memorial permit, however the council has the obligation of making a memorial safe if it is found to be in an unsafe condition. It is important to note, regardless of ownership, the council may take action as required to make the memorial safe.

Memorial Fixing

All memorials over 625mm in height should be designed and installed in compliance with the current BS8415. They are required to be constructed to withstand a force of 70kg applied at the apex of the memorial or at 1500mm (59") from the ground, whichever is the lower. This also extends to ANY memorial over 625 mm that is being re-fixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.

The key requirements are that memorials must be fixed to an approved and suitable foundation and must be further secured using an approved locking or anchoring system.

Full details of the sizes permitted for memorials are contained in detail within the Councils 'Regulations Concerning Memorials' document. Further details on the materials and methods used for fixing and re-fixing of memorials can be found at www.bramm-uk.org

Note that any refixing or repair works to memorials must be completed by a BRAMM (or other equivalent scheme) registered memorial mason. Temporary works to make memorials safe and remove the risk of danger will be undertaken by trained HETC staff.

Memorial Inspections

All memorials over 625mm in height will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling three-year period to assess their safety. The inspection will be both a visual inspection to look for any obvious issues and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial and to what extent.

The staff undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorials overall safety based on a dynamic risk assessment for which they have been trained.

Once inspected each memorial will fall into one of two categories, detailed as follows:

Category 1 – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk and will require immediate attention to make safe or cordon off.

Category 2 – Memorial is safe and should be re-inspected in 3 years as part of the next round of inspections or as part of any other check that may occur, for example when checking memorials around a planned burial ahead of excavation of the grave.

Inspections will be recorded by row not individual headstones with details including the name of the inspector, date of inspection and confirmation that the row fits category 2 and will only record the details of specific memorials if deemed unsafe (category 1).

Category 1 memorials will be recorded in detail to include the following:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification (Section and Number (if identifiable))
- Stone mason (if identifiable)
- Category of Memorial (1 or 2)
- Details of any Actions Taken

Actions Post Inspection

Should a Memorial be identified as a Category 1 and fail the inspection, staff will need to take immediate action to make that memorial temporarily safe or cordon it off

until permanent repairs can be made by the grave owner. These actions will be determined by several factors and the best solution will be administered based on the assessment of the memorial and the surrounding area. These actions may include:

- **Laying the memorial flat** – In most cases this will invariably be where a memorial can be laid down on or within an existing kerb set so as not to cause a new trip hazard. A notice will then be placed on the memorial.
- **Staked and Banded** – The memorial will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The banding will also hold a warning notice. The stake and band will be re-inspected every 12 months to ensure neither have deteriorated.
- **Monolith Conversion** – This involves digging out a depth roughly one third of the overall height of the memorial from the last joint in order that it can be sunk into the ground and made safe. Due to fixing foundations it may be necessary for the memorial to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations. A notice will then be placed on the memorial.
- **Cordoned Off** – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing several memorials due to their safety. Warning signs will be attached to any cordon placed around a memorial or group of memorials.
- **Removal** – In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove a memorial from the grave and place into storage if none of the above options are suitable.

All of the above are regarded as 'Temporary Fixes' and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial and are intended to reduce or remove the risk of a memorial causing harm or damage to someone.

Prior to taking any of the actions above the memorial will be photographed and details recorded of any existing damage or issues.

If HETC staff are not able to make the memorial safe, arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make safe.

Informing Grave Owners

HETC will endeavour to contact the Deed of Exclusive Right owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety inspection. For any memorials over 75 years of age no correspondence will be sent as the Deed of Exclusive Right will have expired.

For any memorial that fails an inspection that has been installed within the previous 6 years, HETC will endeavour to contact either the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully compliant with BS8415 or the Deed of Exclusive Right holder

Grave Owners Responsibilities

The registered deed holder has a responsibility to ensure the memorial is made safe through being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard and works must be undertaken by a qualified and BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) registered Memorial Mason. It is not permitted to carry out repairs by anyone else.

All costs associated with organising a memorial to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken by HETC staff, remain the responsibility of the deed holder.