

Nettleham Parish Council

Memorial Safety Policy



Introduction

This policy has been produced to set out Nettleham Parish Council position regarding memorial safety, the responsibilities of the Council, its Contractors, Memorial Masons, and Deed Holders. The policy provides an overview of the actions that will be taken to minimise risk to users of the cemetery within Nettleham.

The memorials do not belong to the Council; they remain the property and the responsibility of the Deed Holder to the Exclusive Rights of Burial/Memorial.

Responsibilities

The following parties have responsibility for memorial safety within the Council managed cemetery:

The Council has Health and Safety responsibilities to its Employees, Contractors, and visitors to their cemeteries. The Council has a responsibility to Employees (Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) and a responsibility to visitors (Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974). The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a legal duty on the Council to assess the risks from cemetery structures and work activities and ensure that these risks are controlled.

All Monumental Masons have the responsibility to work in accordance with the Council's conditions and specifications for memorials, all memorials shall be constructed of good quality stone with all fixings made in accordance with recognised trade standards (Recommendations of National Association of Monumental Masons (NAMM) or equivalent).

The Deed Holder or successor in title of a memorial has the ultimate responsibility to maintain it so as not to present a hazard to themselves, members of the public or Council Employees, and as such are therefore responsible and liable for all expenditure incurred to make safe their memorial if their memorial is found to be unsafe or in a dangerous condition.

This is not the responsibility of the Council.

Notice of intent

Prior to any memorials being inspected, reasonable steps will be taken by the Council to inform Grave Owners, Deed Holders or successors in title, and members of the public, of the intention to

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inspect memorials and reducing the risk posed by unsafe memorials. Deed holders must inform the Council of a change of address so that they can be contacted if any problems with the memorial/grave plot should occur.

This will involve:

- Giving advance formal notice on the Parish Council website, social media pages etc. of any inspection regime commencing.
- Publishing details of the methodology on the Council's website.
- Placing public notices in prominent locations in the cemetery affected by the assessment regime.
- Where practicable, to notify the Owner, Deed Holder, or successor in title.

Memorial Fixing

It is imperative all works to new and repaired memorials are carried out to the industry standard BS8415 by BRAMM or RQMF registered Memorial Masons.

In order that the industry standards are met it is necessary to regulate both the Memorial Masons and the methodology of memorial works. The Council understands that the Memorial Masons are an important partner to the cemetery service, therefore a more formal partnership and safer system of work will be implemented in the form of the BRAMM, RQMF registration scheme.

The BRAMM, RQMF registration scheme is essential in ensuring that all memorial masons and their fixers that carry out any work within Nettleham Parish Council cemetery are properly trained, insured, and following current industry standards.

Companies or individuals that are not registered to the BRAMM, RQMF scheme will not be permitted to carry out any memorial works in Nettleham Parish cemetery.

- All Memorial Masons will use the latest national standards laid down by the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or the Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) irrespective of whether works are being carried out on new or existing memorials.
- Memorials that have been laid down following non-compliance by the Deed Holder must not be re-erected by anyone but a BRAMM, RQMF registered memorial mason appointed by the Deed Holder, any attempt to do so may result in the memorial being removed from the grave plot and being stored by the Council until such a time as it can be affixed by an appropriate person.

Formal Inspection Program

All individuals carrying out memorial safety inspections shall be trained by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and obtain certificates of competence which shall be held on their personnel file.

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Information notices regarding all inspections shall be displayed within the cemetery grounds at appropriate locations.

Imminent Failures

Memorials that are deemed in danger of imminent failure will have a notice attached (usually with warning tape) in an attempt to ensure that the Deed Holder is made aware of the memorial's poor condition but also to inform other visitors to the Cemetery of the risk of failure posed. Notices placed on memorials include the Council's contact details and must not be removed until essential repairs have been carried out and the memorial has been re-inspected.

The timescale given for action to memorials at risk of imminent failure is 6 weeks from the date of inspection, however, should the Deed Owner/appointed Memorial Mason contact the Council within this timeframe to request flexibility this may be considered dependent upon the level of identified risk from the memorial.

Memorial Inspections

All memorials over 24" in height in the cemetery will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 5-year period to assess their safety. This will be done through both visual assessment and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial and to what extent.

The individual 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 three categories, as detailed as follows:

Category 1 – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk and will require immediate attention to make safe and/or protect from the public.

Category 2 – Memorial is safe but there are minor concerns, and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.

Category 3 – Memorial is Safe and should be re-inspected in 5 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.

The Council has a legal obligation to ensure the cemetery is safe to both visit and work in. In order to be satisfied that this is the case it is essential that Nettleham Parish Council carry out regular inspections of Memorials in a bid to avoid injury or death to any of its staff or visitors.

Staff undertaking the inspections will record the details of every memorial and an assessment of its safety using the categories above. These details will be recorded on to the Parish Office administration system.

The details will include:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification (Section and Number)

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- Category of Memorial (1, 2 or 3)
- 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 based on a number of factors and the best solution will be administered by the memorial inspection team based on their 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 so as not to cause a new trip hazard. A warning sign will be placed near to the memorial.
- Staked and Banded – The memorial will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The band 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. The memorial will have suitable material wrapped around the part under the ground and a memorial warning notice will be added to the grave. Due to foundations, it may be necessary for the memorial to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations.
- Cordoned Off – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing a number of 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.

Informing Grave Owners

Nettleham Parish Council will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety inspection.

Nettleham Parish Council will make every effort to contact grave owners, however if the grave owner is deceased or the last burial was over 50 years ago in our experience it is unlikely that any response will be received therefore no correspondence will be sent. However, a notice will be left on the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.

Any memorial that fails an inspection that has been installed within the previous 6 years we will contact the Memorial Mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully

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compliant with BS8415. The stability guarantee of a memorial is the responsibility of the Memorial Mason and they may provide a longer guarantee period, 6 years is the standard legal period that must be covered by the installation.

Grave Owners Responsibilities

The registered grave owner 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.

Do it yourself repairs by families will not be permitted, memorials must be fixed to the current best standard of the day by a licensed memorial fixer. All costs associated with organising a memorial to be repaired, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

Should grave owners fail to take any action within a reasonable time period then Nettleham Parish Council will look to apply a semi-permanent solution to the memorial, this will involve either laying the memorial down or sinking the memorial into the ground (monolith conversion) or other suitable action.

Nettleham Parish Council need to maintain the cemetery to a high standard and will always try to avoid taking any action that may impact on the general ground's maintenance.

Rolling Program of Inspections

Memorials which fail the test will be inspected again following the expiration of the make safe date to ascertain whether they have been repaired by a BRAMM, RQMF registered Memorial Mason that has been instructed by the grave Deed Owner. Informal visual inspections will also be carried out by Council Staff during their normal work activities i.e., locally to where graves are being dug and grass cutting operations are taking place; should any memorials fail these random visual tests the employee will report their findings to the Parish office.

Communication

Nettleham Parish Council is aware that memorial testing is a sensitive issue for those involved. Regular communication will be maintained so that the public, staff, and members are aware and understand each stage of the testing process. Communication will take place through:

- Council's website
- Council's social media pages
- Signage within the areas affected.