



MEMORIAL TESTING POLICY

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND LIABILITY

- a. Primary responsibility for Health and Safety in Kynaston Road cemetery lies with Didcot Town Council, as it is the burial authority in control of the cemetery. Didcot Town Council is required to control the risks associated with any cemetery for which it has responsibility be they open or closed cemeteries.
- b. Didcot Town Council has responsibility for the overall safety within a burial ground under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, their sites are maintained in a safe condition.
- c. In order to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Didcot Town Council intends to embark on a systematic programme of memorial inspections ensuring that any memorials that pose a risk to Health and Safety are made safe.
- d. The strategic aim of this policy is to ensure that all cemeteries which are under the responsibility of Didcot Town Council, are safe places for staff, visitors and all others who may visit or work in the cemeteries.
- e. Whilst Didcot Town Council has overall responsibility for the safety of the cemetery, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial will be the owner of the exclusive right of burial for the grave.
- f. The owners of memorials are responsible for maintaining the memorial in a good condition. In many cases there is no identifiable owner however.
- g. Memorial Stonemasons must now ensure memorials are erected safely and in accordance with current standards available within the industry . British Standard 8415, the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) code of working practice and the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons Blue Book.

2. IMMEDIATE DANGER

- a. In cases of immediate danger, the Council is empowered under the provision of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 Article 6(1) to take immediate action to make safe dangerous memorials.
- b. The Council is prohibited from taking direct action to remove an unstable memorial, which presents no immediate risk without following the Council's procedure.

3. GUIDANCE

- a. This policy has been designed to mirror the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) guidance. The first

recommendation being that a clear policy should be in place with set standards for management of memorial stability

4. TRAINING

- a. HSE guidance states that All staff should be trained to carry out inspection of unstable memorials
- b. Didcot Town Council will ensure that only suitably qualified staff or contractors will carry out all memorial inspections.

5. MEMORIAL STABILITY INSPECTIONS

- a. The management of memorial safety is based on a risk assessment approach and as a priority; this will involve identifying those memorials, which present an immediate and significant hazard, and making them safe.
- b. Prior to commencing memorial safety inspections the Council will follow the notification procedure as set out under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 Schedule 3 (Whilst schedule 3 relates to memorial clearance, Didcot Town Council confirms that no memorials will be removed. The notification procedure in Schedule 3 is considered to be best practice). This includes notices around the burial ground and in local papers along with notification to any relevant Religious Authority and Commonwealth Graves Commission where required. Applications will be made to the Diocese in order to obtain permission of the Church of England to carry out work on consecrated ground if necessary.
- c. The Council will carry out safety inspections on all memorials as part of a rolling programme on annual and five yearly cycles depending on the condition and risk assessment for each memorial.
- d. A record of all memorial inspections and the results of these inspections will be kept by the Council and will be available to view on request at the Council Offices (one week notice will be required for each request).

6. METHOD STATEMENT

- a. Inspect and make safe where necessary all memorials up to 2.5m in height according to NAMM City & Guilds NPTC Certificate of Competence for the Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials.
- b. The inspector will initially carry out a thorough visual inspection of a memorial looking for signs of decay, e.g. loose or cracked cement, and degree of any lean that may occur. The Inspector should also look for signs of soil erosion around the base of the memorial.
- c. Once an unsafe memorial has been identified, information concerning the memorial is recorded on the dangerous memorials log sheet and the memorial inspection form (Appendix 1).
- d. All relevant details, such as grave and section number, are included on the dangerous memorials log sheet, the condition of the memorial and the work required re-instating the memorial. The date of inspection is also recorded along with any intermediate action

taken, such as attaching a warning (i.e. in the case of an exceptionally dangerous memorial it may be necessary to cordon off the memorial with pins and barrier tape).

- e. In some cases it may also be necessary to photograph memorials that are in a dangerous condition. This may be evident from the degree of inclination or visible cracks in cement. Photographic evidence would, of course, be useful in any future correspondence with the memorial owner. Where a memorial is unstable but where there are no visible signs of deterioration, the need for photographic evidence is dispensed with.

7. DEALING WITH MEMORIALS

- a. Where Cemetery Inspectors have assessed a memorial as showing some evidence of movement but is not in imminent danger of collapse, a warning sign is placed on the memorial informing the grave owner of giving them a contact telephone number for further information. A letter will be sent to the owner if identified, informing of the condition of the memorial and what remedial action is required to ensure the memorial stays safe.
- b. Where no owner can be found the Council will re-assess the memorial in a year, if the situation worsens the Council will lay down the memorial.
- c. Where cemetery inspectors have assessed a memorial as posing an imminent danger Didcot Town Council staff or contractors will make safe the memorial forthwith.
- d. The re-erection of the dangerous memorial remains the responsibility of the grave owner. For this reason the memorial inspection form is conveyed to an appointed Didcot Town Council Officer who is then able to identify the grave owner from the cemetery records.
- e. Once identified, a standard letter is sent to grave owner by the appointed Didcot Town Council Officer informing them of the dangerous state of the memorial and the remedial action taken to make the memorial safe. The letter will also inform the owner that if they wish to re-erect the memorial they must appoint a registered memorial mason and responsibility for their fees lies entirely with the grave owner and not Didcot Town Council or the appointed contractor. Furthermore, notices can be placed around the cemetery displaying the grave and section numbers of memorials made safe.
- f. In the case of memorials that require reinstatement and no living grave owner can be traced, repairs to the memorial could be funded by Didcot Town Council if the grave is deemed to hold historical or aesthetic value.
- g. Where memorials do not have historical or aesthetic value, Didcot Town Council will lay the memorial down on the gravesite any failed memorial if the owner cannot be traced.

- h. All data concerning the memorial, the original memorial inspection form, the contractors emailed copy of the memorial inspection form and the dangerous memorials log sheet, will be filed away for reference and any future communication with grave owners.
- i. Memorials that are found to have a no risk category and pose no significant risk to public safety will be placed on a rolling programme of testing. The length of time will be determined by the inspector. In some cases, the owners or relatives of the exclusive right of burial will be contacted and advised that their memorial would benefit from reinstatement.

8. LAYING DOWN MEMORIALS

- a. Didcot Town Council recognises the sensitive nature of burial grounds and wishes to maintain attractive cemeteries.
- b. Didcot Town Council recognises their duty to keep the public safe, but equally understands the sensitivities of the grave owners and relatives. The permanent laying down of memorials will only take place in extreme circumstances and every attempt will be made to contact the owners or relatives of the Exclusive Rights of Burial. Where grave owners cannot be traced, memorials will be permanently laid down unless the memorials hold an aesthetic or historical value and the Council decides to reinstate these.
- c. If there are no other practical means of making the memorial safe or where the grave owner or relative has requested it, having first received notification of the dangerous state of the memorial, memorials will be permanently laid down in as sensitive a manner as possible
- d. Where possible (i.e. where the memorial can be dismantled) the part of the memorial posing a danger shall be laid down leaving the remainder standing.

9. INSPECTION RECORDS

- a. Memorial inspections will be recorded giving details of: Date of Inspection Grave plot number Name(s) of deceased Type of memorial Condition, lean angle, stability, decay, movement etc. Test . pass/fail Actions required and taken Details of any photographs Timescale for re-inspection
- b. From April 2018 the records will be archived electronically.
- c. All inspection records will be held at the Didcot Town Council offices and will be available to view if requested with one weeks notice.