

Memorial Inspections – Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Council carrying out safety inspections?

To comply with current guidelines from the Scottish Government following a tragic accident in which a child died in a Glasgow cemetery.

Shetland Islands Council is committed to providing a safe environment for families, visitors, memorial stonemasons, contractors and staff within our burial grounds.

What has the Council done to inform people of the inspection programme?

We've informed elected members, Community Councils, Council-approved stonemasons, Goudie's Funeral Directors, Interfaith, all Council staff and issued a press release to the local media.

Notices will also be displayed next to memorials and on burial ground gates.

How will memorials be tested?

Trained staff or structural engineers start by doing a visual inspection of the memorial, followed by a safe manual test.

What happens after the inspection and if my memorial has not passed the inspection?

If your memorial has not passed the safety inspection it will have a green safety notice placed beside it. You will need to contact a Council-approved memorial stonemason to have it repaired who will guide you through the Council's Memorial Permit Application process. If your memorial was in a dangerous condition, and the Council has re-fixed it, a charge will be applied to your lair record and the lair holder (or their beneficiaries or representatives) have a duty to make repayment.

Further instructions will be displayed on burial ground gate notices and the Council's website.

As a last resort, and only when all other options have been ruled out, your memorial may be laid flat or placed in storage.

We do understand that this may be upsetting for you, and are sorry for any distress this might cause, but safety is our first priority.

Why haven't I been contacted before a safety notice has been placed on my memorial?

Our immediate priority is to make sure that our burial grounds are safe for the public to enter. If we have not written to you, it may be because we have no up to date contact details for you, the original lair holder, their beneficiaries or representatives.

Why are memorials failing?

The main reasons for memorials becoming unstable is the failure of the joints or pins, poor installation or weather conditions.

Who is responsible for the safety of the memorial?

Shetland Islands Council is responsible for the overall safety within council burial grounds. However, the lair holder, their beneficiaries or representatives are responsible for the memorial. They have a duty to keep the memorial repaired and in a safe condition, working with a council-approved memorial stonemason.

Can I repair the memorial myself?

No. No-one must attempt to repair or remove any memorial except a properly qualified Council-approved memorial stonemason, or qualified burial staff, to make sure memorials are fixed to the recognised industry standard.

Who is responsible for the cost of the repair?

The responsibility for the cost of a repair or re-fixing of a memorial rests with the lair holder, their beneficiaries or their representatives.

I cannot afford to pay for the repairs, what should I do?

Please don't worry. Phone Burial Services on 01595 744853 or 744898 to discuss, we'll do what we can to help.

Why is a Memorial Permit needed?

Before a memorial is repaired (or a new memorial is placed) the applicant must complete a Memorial Permit application form alongside a memorial stonemason who has been approved by the Council. This ensures that the memorial is being fixed to the recognised industry standard.

How often will the inspections be done?

Our inspection programme will be ongoing on all memorials within our burial grounds.