

**Bute & Cowal Headstone Report**

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**1. BACKGROUND**

In light of 3 fatalities within graveyards in England from 1991 inc: a 9 year old girl and 6 year old boy, Council's were forced to take action to ensure that headstones were inspected and made safe, A programme of inspecting and lowering of dangerous headstones commenced in Argyll & Bute cemeteries in 1997. These actions were seen as a priority by the Council as it was noted that on the 3 occasions of the fatalities within cemeteries it was the local authority who was prosecuted by the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) as the Burial Authority and not the lair owner who is responsible for the upkeep of their headstone.

Letters were subsequently sent out to lair owners who could be identified (a large number of lair owners could not be traced) advising that the lowering of headstones was carried out in light of HSE reports on the fatalities in England.

The decision to refrain from lowering headstones was made by the Director of Roads & Amenity Services after pressure from both members of the public and Council members in 2007.

Funding for headstone re-erection was provided in 2008/09 to allow in-house operatives to carry out repairs with 2 additional staff deployed to assist in the programme in B&C. This funding has been used up and in B&C we are carrying out repairs (re-erecting) during winter months with in-house staff when possible.

Headstone permissions by A&BC since the year 2000 have insisted on securing headstones to foundations by means of metal dowels (see attached detail), inspections have shown that some more recent headstones have not been erected in accordance by NAMM (National Association of Monumental Masons) regulations, these have been reported to the lair owner and letters sent out to the offending Companies to make good.

A large number of Headstones in the Bute and Cowal area are still deemed to be dangerous and a recent round of inspections highlights these numbers as below.

Where a headstone is found to be loose on initial inspection, a topple testing device that allows pressure up to 35kg to be exerted will be used, normally headstones that are loose will not require this amount of pressure to be used before movement is noticeable. (See attached photos)

**2. UPDATE**

**2.1 COWAL AREA to Fri 19<sup>th</sup> Mar 2010**

- **Dunoon Cemetery:** (2749) re-erected to date, to be repaired (551) laid down
- \* **Cowal Cemetery:** (250) re-erected to date, all repairs completed.
- \* **Inverchaolain Cemetery:** (100) re-erected to date, all repairs completed.
- **Kilmun Cemetery:** (240) re-erected to date, (100) still to be repaired, laid down, top tier only, slope created safety issues with gantry equipment. Mechanical equipment would be required to complete this section.
- **Lochgoilhead Cemetery:** No repairs to date (65) still to be repaired, standing.
- **Cairndow *Kilmorich* Cemetery:** No repairs to date (38) still to be repaired, standing.
- **Strachur Cemetery:** No repairs to date (116) still to be repaired standing.
- **Strathlachlan Cemetery:** No repairs to date (14) still to be repaired 3 have fallen down.
- **Glendaruel *Kilmodan* Cemetery:** No repairs to date (74) still to be repaired, standing.
- **Colintraive Cemetery:** No repairs to date (9) still to be repaired, standing.
- **Millhouse Cemetery:** No repairs to date (232) still to be repaired, standing.
- **Kilbride Cemetery:** No repairs to date, numbers requiring repairs to be confirmed.

## 2.2 BUTE AREA to Fri 19<sup>th</sup> Mar 2010

- **Kingarth cemetery:** (27) re-erected to date, (94) still to be repaired, standing. (21) To be repaired laid down.
- **Barone Cemetery:** No repairs to date (151) still to be repaired, standing.
- **North Bute *Croc an Raer* Cemetery:** (145) re-erected to date, still to be repaired (209) standing.
- **Rothsay *Townhead* Cemetery:** (252) re-erected to date, (386) still to be repaired standing, (150) still to be repaired, laid down.

2.3 Given the large numbers of headstones still to be repaired within the Bute & Cowal cemeteries it is clear that the headstone project requires more funding to continue with the programme, where we are finding headstones that are loose, we will endeavour to contact families where possible to advise them of the condition of their headstone.

2.4 It should be noted that the council's current position on this matter is to record lair details of dangerous headstones and advise public of dangers via a sign at cemetery gates.

2.5 A large number of the headstones are of the older / larger type that makes them a higher risk to the public. (see attached photos) taken at Strachur Cemetery.

2.6 In the past, the decision to close cemeteries in light of safety concerns was overruled on the back of strong opposition from the public and by members, Given the serious concerns regarding the larger type headstone I would suggest this issue is investigated fully by our Health & Safety Section and a best solution found to ensure our cemeteries are made safe for both the public and our operatives.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:-

3.1 Note the content of this report

### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 Risk to public and operatives within our cemeteries to be addressed.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Policy</b>	Departmental Health and Safety Policy
<b>Financial</b>	Funding to continue programme of works
<b>Personnel</b>	Safety of operatives and public
<b>Equal Opportunities</b>	None
<b>Legal</b>	Litigation in case of injury / fatality

**Allan Macdonald**  
**Bute and Cowal Streetscene Manager**  
**18<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

**For further information please contact: Allan Macdonald, Milton House, Dunoon**  
**Tel: 01369 798 617**

**Stewart Turner: Head of Roads & Amenity Services**