

**CEMETERY HEADSTONE SAFETY PROJECT - UPDATE**

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**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Previous reports to this committee have described the position regarding headstone safety in Bute and Cowal.
- 1.2 This report updates progress in the Bute and Cowal area, and the recommendations that have been put in place to address the situation.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the information contained and the remedial actions proposed.

**3. DETAIL**

- 3.1 A report presented to the Bute and Cowal Area Committee in Oct 2012 listed a number of proposed actions throughout the burial grounds across the Bute and Cowal area, this was subject to resource availability and to carry out a trial of a substance called "Wet Grab" that had been used in other councils. This is summarised in Table 1.
- 3.2 As highlighted previously, the main area of concern within cemeteries is where we have most visitors and in sections where the larger type memorials are situated, we have carried out headstone repairs in 4 main cemeteries over the winter months where Risk Assessments showed risk to be High, namely Kingarth and North Bute cemeteries on Isle of Bute and Strachur and Lochgoilhead cemeteries in Cowal.
- 3.3 Seven additional staff members have gone through a NAMM registered training course in January on the inspection of headstones to bring the number of trained staff to eleven in B&C within Streetscene, A further

inspection of all memorials will be carried out over the coming months to take forward a further programme of repairs from Oct 2013.

- 3.4 A generic Argyll and Bute council headstone policy is being produced along with updated cemetery rules and regulations, once approved by full council, this suite of information will be sent to monumental masons and new lair holders advising them of this new policy, we currently have in place a process where we find newly erected headstones do not meet the criteria laid down by National Association of Monumental Masons (NAMM), we ask the lair owner to contact the monumental mason who installed the memorial to have the remedial work carried at their own expense.
- 3.5 With the introduction of future work schedules and the implementation of annualised hour's systems of works from April 2013, resources will be available for headstone repairs during winter of 13/14 and beyond as focus on repairs will be addressed as part of Streetscene review and future priorities.
- 3.6 Repairs in Cowal (Sandbank) cemetery are complete.

**TABLE 1 - Number of stones in each area by cemetery**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Cemetery</b>	<b>Already lowered</b>	<b>Stones currently unsafe &amp; still standing</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Bute</b>	Kingarth	0	54	Repairs carried out to 11 stones in older section.  Wet Grab trialled on 30 headstones of which 10 remain secure.
	Barone	0	151	Trial adhesive on smaller stones
	North Bute	6	19	.  Trial adhesive on 57 smaller stones – 38 remain secure
	Townhead	15	86	Restrict access or lower stones in older section  Trial adhesive on smaller

				stones
<b>Cowal</b>	Millhouse	0	212	Trial adhesive
	Kilmodan	0	74	Restrict access or lower stones
	Strachlachlan	18	0	Identify resource for phased re-erection
	Kilmorlich	0	38	Restrict access or lower stones
	Colintraive	0	9	Trial adhesive on smaller stones
	Kilmun	100	0	Identify method of work for steep ground
	Lochgoilhead	0	6	59 have been lowered and pinned / re-erected over winter months (many older type foundations were built on brick construction and completely rebuilt).
	Strachur	0	116	1 large type headstone within gate area has been repaired- caution signs placed on entrance gates alerting public to potential danger.
	Dunoon (old cemetery)	540		Identify resource for phased re-erection

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The actions summarised above in Table 1 are those previously proposed in the April 2011 Area Committee report, for each of the burial grounds across the Bute and Cowal area, this information has been updated to show works in Kingarth, North Bute, Strachur and Lochgoilhead cemeteries over the past 6 months.

- 4.2 Where larger / older memorial stones present a serious health and safety issue and we cannot identify lair owners, we will lower the headstone to remove the immediate danger, where we can identify lair holders; we will ask that the monumental masons are requested to rectify the problem at their own expense. This would be the preferred option prior to Streetscene teams; the option to close off access to certain areas within the appropriate burial grounds will only be taken on a risk based approach.
- 4.3 The substance namely “Wet Grab” had been used by a London council and the feedback from them was very positive, It is clear given information from this report, that this is not an economic or trustworthy short-term fix as hoped, possibly due to our climate, we will need consider alternative ways of carrying out quick fix repairs to lawn type memorials.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

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| 5.1 | Policy                       | Service Asset Management, Cemetery Management Rules  |
| 5.2 | Financial                    | Resources need to be identified to enable safe re-erection of stones, although a proportion of work may be completed by Streetscene staff. Contributions can initially be sought from lair holders and monumental masons. Resource required for investigation of large stones and subsequent repair programme. |
| 5.3 | Personnel                    | Additional staff trained to inspect stones and rectify dangerous examples.   |
| 5.4 | Equalities Impact Assessment | None   |
| 5.5 | Legal                        | Argyll and Bute Council duty of care.  |

For further information, please contact: Tom Murphy, Streetscene Manager, Tel: 01436 658908.

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