

East Renfrewshire Council submission of 21 December 2022

PE1941/P: Stop the destruction of headstones within community cemeteries

I refer to your recent letter dated 23rd November 2022 requesting East Renfrewshire Council's views on the above petition.

East Renfrewshire Council are currently undertaking an ongoing programme of memorial inspection in line with Scottish Government Guidance. Our application of this guidance relates to the resource and means the Council has at its disposal.

With respect to the committee's request, I can confirm ERC currently do not contact lair owners when a headstone is identified as a risk. It is the Council's experience that lair ownership details are not maintained by the lair owners and any subsequent successor information is rarely updated as a matter of course and lapses over time, without action on behalf of the lair owner.

In previous years when undertaking memorial inspection activity, there was active effort made by East Renfrewshire Council to trace lair owners to highlight stability concerns. Unfortunately, any response and subsequent action by said lair owners was not forthcoming. This exercise directed resources from other activities, provided no benefit to the Council and delayed any immediate action required.

As a result of the above experience, when there is an active programme of inspection in operation, information notices are placed on the main entrance ways into the Cemetery and there is further information on the programme on the Council's internet page.

Other than the requirement from Council's to undertake inspections and apply solutions from a health and safety perspective, the Council does not have the resources or public funds available to "restore" headstones. Headstones which have "failed" inspections will have a safety solution applied by the Council only. Said solution being in line with Scottish Government Guidance.

Responsibility for Headstones rests with the lair owner and unfortunately with council budgets being under increasing pressures we would not in a position to support a significant number of headstone repairs with a view to restoration.

In summary, I can confirm that East Renfrewshire Council does not agree with the petition given consideration of the costs associated with repairing all headstones nor is the Council in a position to assign resource to contacting lair owners given our past experience and the need to act with urgency should a serious health and safety issue arise.