

Dumfries and Galloway Council submission of 14 December 2022

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

Thank you for your letter dated 23 November 2022 regarding a petition received by the Scottish Parliament from Councillor Wood in May 2022 regarding Memorial/Headstone Safety.

As requested by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, I can confirm as follows:-

- A. The Committee is keen to know whether Dumfries and Galloway Council routinely communicates with lair owners regarding potential impacts on maintenance as a result of their health and safety works.** The Council routinely communicates with lair holders following memorial/headstone safety inspections within cemeteries as detailed within the report presented to Communities Committee on 3 February 2022 noted below. Our communications plan in relation to this project has been updated and is consistent with national guidance.
- B. The Committee is also keen to understand how Dumfries and Galloway Council liaises with owners and how it takes their concerns into account when undertaking health and safety assessments and in coming to a decision to move headstones.** Within our communications plan, signage is displayed within cemeteries 28 days in advance of inspections taking place. Once a memorial/headstone is inspected, if it has failed the assessment then a small A5 sign is also displayed on the headstone asking the owner to contact Dumfries and Galloway Council. OFFICIAL OFFICIAL The lair holder is written to if we have contact details. If we do not have contact details, then we will attempt to find the Lair owner through local contacts such as funeral directors and Community Councils. Once Lair holders are contacted, we discuss the issue with them and talk through any concerns they may have. We will also confirm the Lair owner's

responsibility of maintenance and repair of the headstone and the Council responsibility to ensure safety within cemeteries.

For background information, I can confirm that in order to improve the Memorial/Headstone Safety project within Dumfries and Galloway we updated our project plan and procedures to further reflect the National guidelines which included our Communications plan. This was reported to Members at Communities Committee on 3 February 2022 – “Memorial/Headstone Safety Project across Dumfries and Galloway” - (Item 7). ([Agenda for Communities Committee on Thursday, 3rd February, 2022, 10.30 am - Dumfries and Galloway Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) Agenda for Communities Committee on Thursday, 3rd February, 2022, 10.30 am - Dumfries and Galloway Council ([moderngov.co.uk](#)))

I trust this information is helpful, however if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.