

Fenland District Council

Memorial Safety Guidelines

Revised: September 2025

Review: September 2026

Memorial Safety in Fenland's Cemeteries

This policy sets out the Council's approach to memorial safety inspections based upon the [Ministry of Justice guidance](#). The Council manages the risks posed by memorials in cemeteries using a five-year rolling inspection programme.

Primary responsibility for safety in cemeteries lies with Fenland District Council. Whilst the Council is responsible for cemetery safety, memorial owners are responsible for their individual memorial and its condition. It is recognised that there may no longer be an identifiable owner in many cases or a correct correspondence address.

Memorial Inspection and Assessment

Memorial assessments will:

- Identify potential hazards.
- Evaluate risk and actions required to mitigate identified risks.
- Record findings and implement actions where necessary.
- Be reviewed as a rolling programme every five years.

The inspection team will plan inspections of complete cemeteries when assessing memorial safety. To formally log an inspection of a section within a cemetery the inspector will conduct the following:

When starting the assessment of a cemetery section the inspector will carry out the following:

- Log an inspection of the specific cemetery.
- Detail within the inspection record the specific section that will be inspected.
- Take an image of the section for reference.

Types of Memorial

There are three types of memorial:

- Those under 0.8 metres (most)

- Those 0.8-1.8 metres (some)
- Those 1.8 metres plus (rare)

A trained operative will undertake physical inspections for all memorials under 1.8 metres high and visual inspections for all memorials above this height and record results as follows:

| Memorial height | Test | If potentially unsafe | If safe | Follow-up if potentially unsafe. |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--|-----------|---|
| Under 0.8m | Safe or unsafe | Strap banding to memorial, record and send information to Bereavement team | No action | Bereavement Team contacts Exclusive Rights holder (if known). If Exclusive Rights Holder is unknown then strap remains in place to warn cemetery users of a potential danger |
| 0.8m to 1.8m | Safe or unsafe | Record and send to the Bereavement team, Open Spaces Contract Manager and Tivoli. Band memorial. If banding is not possible due to very unsafe nature of the memorial the actions below should be followed | No action | Bereavement contact Exclusive Rights holder (if known), or in the case of a particularly unsafe memorial the actions detailed below should be carried out. |
| 1.8m or taller (Visual only) | Safe or unsafe | Record sent to Tivoli and POS Manager | No action | Tivoli or POS team to render safe or contact stone mason for repair |

Where a memorial is considered potentially unsafe, then banding should be undertaken with caution and at no time should the assessor take any risk with their own safety.

If there is any doubt about the safe ability to attach a banding if, for instance, the memorial was particularly wobbly, unsafe, or with significant deterioration in the case of a tall memorial, then no attempt should be made to attach banding, but banding should be hooped, where possible, over the memorial or an aspect of the memorial, to signify the unsafe nature of the memorial.

In these circumstances the Open Spaces Contract Manager should be contacted immediately by the assessor to mobilise Tivoli to attend within two working days to make the memorial safe.

Tivoli will be instructed by the Open Spaces Contract Manager or other open spaces team member to:

1. Lay down an unsafe memorial in the case of memorials up to 1.8m in height
2. Cordon the area off around a memorial greater than 1.8m in height to ensure that in the event of a failure cemetery users would not be injured.

The Open Spaces Contract Manager will then:

1. In the case of a laid down memorial, ensure that the Bereavement Team have contacted the Exclusive Rights Holder to inform them of the necessary action and the need to the Right Holder to arrange a memorial mason to assess and re-erect the memorial in the future.
2. In the case of a memorial exceeding 1.8m in height, arrange for a specialist assessment of the safety of the memorial within 21 working days. Following receipt of a safety report, to then place purchase orders within 14 working days of the report's receipt to action the recommendations within the report as determined by the specialist.

In the case of item 2 above, the cordon around the memorial should remain in place until either a report has stated that the memorial is safe, or the actions of the report highlighting actions required have been completed.

Definitions

SAFE:

Where a memorial is assessed as SAFE (posing no obvious risk to people within the cemetery) it will not be reported.

POTENTIALLY UNSAFE:

A memorial (under 0.8m) is identified as POTENTIALLY UNSAFE where it is at risk of toppling and causing injury. A memorial will only be deemed POTENTIALLY UNSAFE if it will move and would continue to move until it falls to the ground under an initial firm, but reasonable, force.

Those that are assessed as POTENTIALLY UNSAFE will have a band affixed around the memorial alerting public.

The inspector will contact the Bereavement team to contact the Exclusive Rights holder within 30 days notifying the holder of the need of repair.

The task text will detail the

- Cemetery Section
- Plot reference
- Name on memorial

Additionally, the affixed band and the memorial details will be logged in a photograph of the unsafe memorial.

The bereavement team will record the details of the inspector's assessment on the bereavement software and will also record details of when a letter was sent and to whom, with contact information.

EXCEPTION to the instructions above:

Memorials in a conservation area - Memorials deemed to be of historic significance:

Where a memorial is dated pre 1948 and is identified as being POTENTIALLY UNSAFE and is in the grounds of listed chapels or within a conservation section, inspectors should report these as POTENTIALLY UNSAFE but add a narrative about potential historic significance and send the message to the Open Spaces Contract Manager and Bereavement Team.

This Manager will contact the Conservation Officer within 14 working days and agree steps to make the memorial safe, whilst preserving historical value. A purchase order for this work will be completed with 60 working days after the initial inspection.

Memorials greater than 1.8m high

Due to the diverse nature and complexity of these memorials, the inspector will carry out a **visual inspection only**. The inspector will determine which of the following is the best course of action.

Assessed as SAFE:

Those memorials do not require any action and will not be reported.

Assessed as POTENTIAL RISK:

Require prompt professional inspection and advice. A band (or several bands) will be put in place by the inspector immediately (if safe to do so).

Reported to the Open Spaces Contract Manager immediately who will follow the instructions above.

The report text will detail:

- Cemetery Section
- Plot reference
- Name on memorial
- Additionally, the affixed notice and the memorial details will be logged in a photograph of the potential risk memorial.

Communication

In recognition of the sensitivities of the memorial inspection process and the management of the outcomes from it, good communication with the local community is necessary.

Notices are on display at all cemeteries informing visitors that inspections are taking place. Signage also includes details of who to contact with any queries or concerns. The Council's website also gives details of the memorial inspection process.

Memorial Masons

All memorial masons who carry out work within the Council's cemeteries will meet the following requirements:

Every mason shall be insured for public liability to the value of £5,000,000.

Businesses will be registered with BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) and at least one fixer per installation will hold a BRAMM Fixers Licence or with NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons). Membership of both is optional.

Memorial Safety Inspection Procedure

Only officers trained to an ICCM approved standard for memorial inspections will carry out safety inspections.

A single officer may carry out inspections to memorials in accordance with a risk assessment, taking account of lone working practice.

Suitable Personal Protective Equipment must be worn.

Fenland District Council will not arrange for repair of memorials which are damaged as part of the inspection process, i.e. where a headstone has failed the hand test and fallen due to pre-existing weakness of the memorial, then broken into pieces.

Where a memorial is covered by vegetation and cannot be inspected, the memorial represents a low risk and does not require any report.

The Cemeteries Officer or Open Spaces Contracts Manager will ensure that any Friends groups, or contractors carrying out works to clear vegetation from memorials will do so carefully with the expectation that the memorial may be POTENTIALLY UNSAFE as vegetation is being removed.

Any ornament on the top of a memorial should be inspected with care, as these objects may pose a risk to the safety of the inspector and members of the public.

Visual Inspection prior to a hand test

A visual inspection should take place of all memorials prior to a hand test. As noted above, no hand test should be undertaken of memorials exceeding 1.8m in height.

Consideration should be given to:

- Damaged or eroded bonding
- Movement of parts of a memorial from their original position
- Kerb stones breaking apart
- Undermined or unstable foundations
- Leaning memorials – particularly if there is evidence of recent movement
- Evidence of structural damage or disturbance
- The presence of vegetation, which may cause cracks to widen.

Hand Testing

The hand test should be carried out standing to one side of the memorial, the position to be determined by the initial visual inspection. A gentle pressure should be gradually increased until a reasonable force is applied. This force should be exerted in one direction, away from the body, and should be repeated from the other side of the memorial. The force should be applied at the apex of the memorial or as high up the memorial as can be safely reached.

Memorials that do not move following the initial force will be considered SAFE.

A memorial will be deemed to pose a POTENTIAL RISK if it will move but not continue until it falls to the ground as a result of the hand test.

Memorial Safety Inspection Responsibilities – FDC Open Spaces Contract Manager:

Inspect cemetery signage annually to ensure cemetery visitors have appropriate information regarding the inspection programme.

Liaise with Tivoli in the case of significantly unsafe memorials below 1.8m in height and those deemed as potentially unsafe above 1.8m in height.

Liaison with specialist memorial masons regarding inspection reports regarding memorials exceeding 1.8m in height that are deemed potentially unsafe.

Liaison with the Conservation officer for any UNSAFE memorials that fall in a conservation area, within the grounds of a listed chapel or pre-date 1948.

Memorial Safety Inspection Responsibilities – FDC Cemeteries Officer:

Work with the Open Spaces Contract Manager responding to tasks for memorials exceeding 1.8m tall, engaging specialist inspectors as required.

Memorial Safety Inspection Responsibilities – FDC Street Scene Team

Plan monthly inspection regime to achieve annual performance indicator target.

Carry out inspections and affix any required banding and record results accordingly.

Memorial Safety Inspection Responsibilities – FDC Bereavement Team

On receipt of a notification of a POTENTIALLY UNSAFE memorial, where possible the support team will send a letter to the exclusive rights holder informing them of the inspection outcome. The letter will ask that the rights holder contacts an approved memorial mason and subsequently contacts FDC to confirm the completed action.

All actions to be logged against the memorial record on the Council's bereavement software.