

Belton Parish Council Memorial Safety Policy

Name of Organisation	Belton Parish Council
Date Policy Agreed	July 2025
Date of Next Review	May 2027
Signature of Chair	

Belton Parish Council is duty bound under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations Act to assess reasonably foreseeable risks from its activities and to put in place control measures that will reduce the risks – so far as is reasonably practicable.

It is the Parish Council's intention to follow the latest guidance from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) on memorial safety and the Ministry of Justice – 'Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials' (2009). It will take appropriate action to any memorial deemed unsafe within the Cemetery.

In recent years the safety of memorials has become a focus of much attention and debate. Over the last 40 years a small number of people have been killed when a memorial has fallen on them. Given the number of memorials and the number of visitors to burial grounds in any year, the risk of any injury is extremely low. Action to manage risks in burial grounds, therefore, needs to be sensible, proportionate and undertaken in a sensitive way.

New Memorials

All new memorials must conform to the criteria set out in Belton Parish Council's Cemetery Rules and Guidance document. A copy of which can be found on the Council's website or by request from the Parish Clerk.

Method Statement

Belton Parish Council, or it's chosen contractor, will prepare a Method Statement prior to the commencement of any safety testing.

Records

Records of the inspections will be held indefinitely. These records may be held electronically as long as the data is backed up.

Frequency of Inspection

Inspections will be carried out on a minimum frequency of 5 years.

Communication and Notices

The council is aware that the testing of memorials is a sensitive issue and will endeavour to ensure adequate communication is maintained with the general public. The Parish Council will follow the notification procedure as set out under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order (LACO) 1974. The Parish Council will ensure a notice is displayed in the noticeboard at the entrance to the Cemetery, on the Council's website, on the Council's noticeboards in the Parish as well as in the local news publication 1 month prior to the memorial safety tests being carried out. The notices will give details of the forthcoming inspections, advise the public of the potential dangers of memorials and provide contact details for the public should they have any queries or concerns.

Memorial Testing

Visual Check

Memorials will undergo an initial visual check to identify if there are obvious defects or signs of instability. If a defect or unstable memorial is observed, such memorials will then be subject to a physical test.

Physical Check

If a memorial does not pass a visual check, it will be subject to a physical check. Prior to any physical test a safety assessment will take place. The physical testing will only take place when there is no risk to other persons and will be done using a hand test. Force testing equipment will only be used in the case of dispute.

The memorial inspector will stand to one side of the memorial and apply a firm but steady pressure in different directions to determine to what degree, if any, the headstone is loose. A gentle pressure/force should be gradually increased until a force of approximately 25kg is applied. This force should be exerted in one direction, away from the body and should be repeated from the back of the memorial. Other physical hand tests from the sides of the memorial may also be required on certain designs. The force should be applied at the apex of the memorial or a high up the memorial as can comfortably be reached.

Memorial Classification

At the completion of the testing process the memorial safety inspector will identify memorials in one of three categories:

- 1 Stable and not dangerous in any way; to be reassessed in five years

The memorial will be re-assessed in 5 years.

- 2 Requires immediate attention to make safe by stabilising with a stake and banding.

A memorial will be braced with a stake and banded and a safety notice clearly displayed. Photographs of the memorial will be taken at the time of the testing and

after the memorial is banded and staked. The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be identified and an attempt will be made to contact the owner within 7 working days. The letter will request that the memorial be repaired within 12 weeks. Where the holder of the EROB does not contact the council within the 12 week period, and no repair is arranged for the memorial, a temporary support will remain in place up to a maximum of 6 months. At the end of the 6 month period, the memorial will be treated as a Category 3 memorial. If necessary, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial will need to take place to enable the repair to go ahead.

- 3 Requires immediate attention to make safe by laying down the memorial within the grave space.

The memorial will be carefully laid flat within the grave space and a notice will be displayed. Photographs will be taken at the time of the inspection and when the memorial is laid flat. The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be identified and an attempt will be made to contact the owner within 7 working days. The letter will request that the memorial be repaired within 12 weeks. If necessary, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial will need to take place to enable the repair to go ahead.

Memorial Repairs

Any repair carried out to a memorial will be at the cost to the Exclusive Right of Burial holder and must be carried out by a NAMM registered memorial mason to BS8415. The holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial must inform the Parish Clerk of the name of the memorial mason carrying out the work. The memorial mason must supply the Clerk with a copy of their NAMM certificate and obtain a permit from the Clerk prior to any work being undertaken on the memorial. A confirmation of conformity that the memorial repair has been carried out to BS8415 must be given to the Clerk on completion of the work.