

Idmiston Parish Council Grave Digging Policy
Adopted April 2026

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the requirements for appointing and managing third-party grave diggers operating within Idmiston Parish Council's cemetery sites. It ensures compliance with UK health and safety legislation, protection to the public and the maintenance of professional standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all contractors engaged in grave excavation, preparation and backfilling activities within the grounds managed by Idmiston Parish Council.

3. Documentation

Before any work commences, the contractor must provide:

- i. Public Liability Insurance
- ii. Employer's Liability Insurance (where applicable)
- iii. Relevant qualifications and competency certificates
- iv. Method Statements and Risk Assessments
- v. Proof of training

4. Risk Assessments

Contractors must submit site specific risk assessments covering:

- i. Excavation hazards
- ii. Ground conditions
- iii. Proximity to other graves and memorials
- iv. Public interface risks
- v. Use of machinery and tools

5. Locating and marking graves

Graves must be identified using an official grave plan. **Contact the Clerk for an up-to-date plan.**

All graves must be dug centrally within their respective grave spaces for the following reasons:

- i. If grave is not dug centrally within its respective grave space one of the walls separating the adjacent grave will be of a narrower width and will increase the risk of collapse of that particular side of the grave.
- ii. When reopening a grave that was previously dug out of centre the risk of collapse is increased.
- iii. When a memorial is erected centrally on a grave that was dug out of centre the risk of

the memorial subsiding and tilting is increased which in turn increases the risk of the memorial becoming unstable and a danger in its own right

6. Health and Safety

All gravediggers are to be trained; any untrained personnel should be closely supervised by a qualified individual. All excavations must be properly planned and supervised.

Appropriate safety footwear and hard hat must always be worn when working in an excavation. All Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must comply with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) requirements.

The ICCM recommends that a second person is in attendance whenever work is being carried out in an excavation of depth greater than 3' (0.91m) to comply with the requirements of the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 Section 5 (1) and the Manual Handling Regulations 1992.

On no account must a gravedigger climb out of a grave by treading on any part of the shoring. A ladder must remain in place during whenever the operative is in the grave to ensure a safe emergency exit is available (Confined Spaces Regulations 1997). **A ladder must be used for entry and egress from a grave.**

Mechanical excavation must be carried out by competent operators only and equipment must be inspected regularly to ensure compliance. If mechanical shoring equipment includes a lockable cover for security, it must be used. Any Hydraulic equipment must be regularly inspected and serviced by a qualified professional to ensure compliance with safety standards (Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998).

Any defective equipment must be immediately removed from use.

Graves left unattended for any reason must be securely boarded over to prevent any accidental falls.

7. Grave Digging

Appropriate signage must be displayed to warn the public and work areas must be cordoned off.

Barriers or covers must be installed around open graves when left unattended.

Graves should be dug centrally within the marked grave space to prevent the risk of collapse, as uneven soil walls can lead to instability.

Once excavation is complete, graves should be covered with imitation grass matting, ensuring no folds or gaps that could cause tripping hazards.

Walk boards must be placed across the grave, supported at both ends to carry the weight of pallbearers and the coffin and must remain in place until back filling is completed.

Any nearby memorials that could pose a risk must be moved to a safe location temporarily and returned after the interment. It is recommended to notify memorial owners in advance to explain the temporary relocation for safety purposes.

Shoring should be integrated as digging progresses, especially once the excavation reaches the depth of the shoring panels as per Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 Part 4, regulation 22 (1) (CDM) number Regulations. Shoring timbers, struts, and other safety components should be checked for wear and tear before each use.

Contractors must be mindful of mourners and cemetery visitors; noise and disruption must be kept to a minimum.

8. Backfilling

Backfilling should occur as soon as mourners have left and on the same day.

Graves must be backfilled safely and compacted appropriately.

Grounds must be left level and safe for public access

All temporary protections must be removed once safe.

9. Paperwork

a. Accident and incident reporting:

- i. all accidents, near missed or dangerous occurrence must be reported immediately
- ii. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) – reportable incidents must be notified in accordance with legal requirements.
- iii. A written report must be submitted within 24 hours.

b. Paperwork and record submission. All required paperwork must be returned to the Parish Council within 48 hours completion. This includes

- i. All completed inspection reports.
- ii. Signed methods statements and confirmation of adherence.
- iii. Incident/accident reports (if applicable)
- iv. Waste transfer notes (if applicable)

10. Termination of Contract

Idmiston Parish Council reserve the right to terminate contractor engagement if:

- i. Safety standards are breached

- ii. Documentation is not provided
- iii. Insurance requirements are not maintained.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, following a significant incident or legislative change.