

District Council fined £50,000 after worker seriously injured in lawnmower incident

- Bassetlaw District Council has been fined £50,000 after an employee was seriously injured when a ride-on lawnmower overturned
- HSE found the council had failed to carry out a suitable risk assessment
- The Judge found the council to be highly culpable, having fallen far short of expected industry standards

A Nottinghamshire district council has been fined £50,000 following a serious incident in which a ride-on mower overturned at a churchyard, causing an employee to fall more than two metres onto a public road and footpath below.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated the incident at St Peter & St Paul's Church in North Wheatley, Nottinghamshire, where an employee of Bassetlaw District Council was carrying out routine maintenance in the closed graveyard.



Photograph on the day of the incident showing the location of the ride on mower following the accident

While operating a ride-on mower, the employee lost control of the machine as it slid down a steep bank towards a retaining wall. Both the machine and the operative rolled over the wall, falling approximately 2.3 metres to the pavement and road below. The employee sustained injuries including cracked ribs.

The HSE investigation identified a series of significant failings by the council:

- Bassetlaw District Council had not carried out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks posed to employees by operating ride-on mowers on banks and slopes.
- The council had not provided adequate information, instruction or training to employees regarding the use of such machinery near slopes and banks.
- No measures were in place at the retaining wall to prevent a fall from height liable to cause personal injury.



Photograph taken from the Church Yard, set back from the slope, looking down onto the junction of Church Hill and Church Street

[A Guidance Document for the Landscape Industry](#) published by the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) sets out clearly the measures employers should take to assess and control risks when working on or near slopes and banks. The Judge found that Bassetlaw District Council had failed to meet these industry standards and was therefore highly culpable, having fallen far short of what was expected.

Bassetlaw District Council, of Queen's Buildings, Potter Street, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, S80 2AH, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The council was fined £50,000, ordered to pay £5,138.85 in costs and a victim surcharge of £2,000 at Nottingham Magistrates' Court on Monday 30 March 2026.



Church Hill

HSE Inspector Muir Finlay said: “This was a serious incident which could have been much worse.

“The fine imposed on the District Council should underline to all employers that work on banks and slopes should only be undertaken when a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks has been carried out and appropriate controls or training provided.

“HSE will not hesitate to take action against those that do not do all that they should to keep people safe and healthy at work.”

The HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Andrew Siddall and paralegal officer Benjamin Stobbart.

Further Information

1. [The Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people & places and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) are available.
4. Guidance can be found here: [A Guidance Document for the Landscape Industry](#)

5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences in England can be found [here](#) and those for Scotland [here](#).