



29<sup>th</sup> August 2013

**Proposed display of human remains at the new Stonehenge Visitor Centre**

Dear Loraine,

Further to the correspondence that has taken place between you and our volunteer, Christine Cleere, we are writing to you once again to offer proposals that may help resolve the current situation regarding the display of human remains at the new visitor centre, focusing in particular on the proposal that one of the exhibits be shown upright, 'as in life'.

Honouring the Ancient Dead (HAD) would like to make it clear that it supports the new visitor centre and wants it to be both successful and effective, and not become the cause for a long running controversy or the ongoing focus of campaigns opposing its exhibits.

However, as previously expressed, HAD is disappointed with the descriptions of the proposals for the displays of the ancestors. HAD asserts that ancestors should not be placed on display, and will continue to state the case, explaining to the wider public why it is unacceptable, citing our Best Practice Guidelines and our Definitions document, previously sent to you for your reference and guidance.

In addition, HAD recognises that a considerable number of visitors to Stonehenge may not care if genuine bones are placed on display, reflecting policies that have been in place for many years in a considerable number of museums and exhibitions. Even if over 80% of visitors were happy to see the exhibits, that would still leave a significant 20% who were uncomfortable with viewing a display of genuine human bones, which given the numbers expected at the new centre is a considerable number of visitors each year.

Many museums also include specific guidance as to how any ancestors should be displayed. For example, the University of London states very clearly:

1. Wherever possible skeletons will be displayed in the position and layout, in which they were found.
2. Wherever possible skeletons will be displayed in the coffin, or burial surroundings in which they were found.

Therefore, and following an invitation to the wider HAD community, including our advisors, volunteers and supporters, we believe that a proposal that is satisfactorily for all parties can be found, which is the use of replica bones.

Such a solution would provide a simple way to remove the current contention that surrounds the proposed displays, and would integrate the display with HAD's Display Guidance. It would ensure that no harm or damage to the bones could

occur, and would allow for a more robust display without risking further controversy. Additionally, no major design change is necessary at such a late stage in the project's development, would ensure that the display met its objective and that the visitor centre was a cause for celebration, not continued controversy; a controversy that will continue as long as ancestors are placed on display.

Finally, and as previously advised, we are aware that English heritage is reviewing the current proposals regarding these displays, and therefore would ask to be kept informed of any decisions, being kept 'in the loop'.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Restall Orr  
Mike Fletcher  
Honouring the Ancient Dead

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