Definitions

Acknowledging how important terminology is in the framing of our thoughts and the recognition of assumptions in any discussion, the following presents some key words used when talking about the respectful treatment of what are commonly known as 'human remains'. By providing clarity with regard to the definitions used by HAD, the purpose of this document is to move beyond the oppositional debate based on the misunderstanding of terms (as embodied in the DCMS 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, 2005'), and towards the recognition of solutions attainable through an approach involving a more inclusive cultural contribution.

HAD asserts that:

- As human beings we have a duty of care towards every other human person.
- The dead retain their personhood as integral and influencing members of the community.
- Personhood entails the need for respectful interaction.

Respect	
Dictionary Definition	'A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements.' *Oxford English Dictionary*
Discussion	Those with an interest in the deceased generally now understand that interaction with them should be respectful. What we understand by respect, however, differs according to what we are interacting with: within secular and dualist culture, respect for a living human being is expressed differently from respect for what is perceived to be an object.
HAD Perspective	A deceased human being remains an active (influencing) member of their family, community, society and landscape long after their death. Their reach in death may depend on their position in life and any known legacy, but furthermore their actions will have had effects that touch the present, as does any remaining evidence of their physicality. Recognition of this necessitates respect for the person, however long ago they died. Cultures with integrated or animist metaphysics, based on nature or ancestor worship, may perceive this ongoing influence more strongly, particularly in regard to the deceased's body or bones, than might those with dualist or materialist beliefs. HAD advocates for the ancient and pre-Christian dead of the British Isles, whose metaphysics would have been pagan in one way or

	another, touching this perspective of ongoing influence. However, HAD asserts that these sensitivities should be taken into consideration in all circumstances, whether the deceased's beliefs are known or not.
HAD Definition	**Interaction with the deceased is respectful when all unnecessary harm is avoided.**
Implications	**Implications:** • A person is never an object, and so can never be owned. • A person may be the subject of scientific study, but is never scientific material. • Personhood persists, even beyond the scope of memory, or living or provable descendants. • It is possible to interact respectfully with a person even where consent is not attainable. • A caring community assures a respectful place of rest for the dead. **Harmful action:** • Harm is understood as the diminution, degradation or devaluation, of someone or something in a way that causes suffering. • Harm can be measured spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically or scientifically. **Respectful interaction:** • The funereal intent of that person is acknowledged and, as far as is possible, not contravened. • The deceased person is not separated from the land that they have been a part of for centuries or millennia. • The person's physicality is allowed to decay naturally, completing the process of dissolution into the environment, instead of being separated and isolated from nature. **Disrespectful interaction:** • The person's physicality is damaged, stored or displayed as if they were a non-senescent person.
Dignity	
Dictionary Definition	'The state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect.' *Oxford English Dictionary*
Discussion	There are many definitions of dignity. Some, like the one above, lean towards nobility, loftiness and grandeur. Many, again like the one above, are rather circular – referring to honourability and respectability.

	Alternative definitions relating to esteem or worth contain sentiments upholding concepts such as decency, modesty, delicacy, feelings and sensibilities.
HAD Perspective	HAD believes that the sentiment of the second definition should be given greater prominence. Two principles should apply to uphold dignity for humans: 1. The right to dignity should not be confused by evidence of status. 2. The right to dignity should be a persistent human right – for all of that person's existence. In other words, the right to be treated with dignity applies to all, and includes the dead – named or nameless. Time or status should not diminish or dilute this right. It applies to ancient as well as recently deceased persons equally. The only waiver to this principle can come from living, ethically-obtained consent. As it is not possible to gain the consent of the deceased, HAD's remit for the ancient dead arises as a result. HAD's aim is to restore, or prevent the removal of, dignity to a deceased person.
Implications	**Unless clear, specific, informed consent was given by the person before death, the deceased should never be displayed, in any form. Storage of the dead should endeavour to encompass dignity by following best practice standards.** Practical application of this principle gives rise to HAD's critique of any situation in conflict with it. For example, UNESCO was founded after the Second World War in part to uphold the dignity of humanity. According to HAD's perspective, the inclusion of the deceased in the display at Stonehenge (a UNESCO world heritage site) is a breach of that person's persisting right to dignity and is, therefore, a fundamental breach of UNESCO's founding principles. Constitution of UNESCO, adopted London on 16 November 1945; reconfirmed every year since, *extract*: 'The Government of the States Parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare: … That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of **dignity**, equality and mutual respect of men, […]. That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the **dignity** of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern'.

Human Remains	
Dictionary Definition	The word 'remains' used in the term 'human remains' implies a particular worldview. Remains are 'the parts left over after other parts have been removed, used, or destroyed; historical or archaeological relics; a person's body after death'. *Oxford English Dictionary* The DCMS definition of human remains[1] clearly expresses a scientific materialist perspective.
Discussion	A worldview which states that the mind, spirit or soul leaves the body at death, whether it is destroyed or resides elsewhere, will inevitably perceive the physical body as empty. Because mind, spirit or soul tend to be considered as the valuable essence of a human life, what remains after death has no value except for that which may be accrued from their use by the living.
HAD Perspective	**Regardless of how much of the deceased's life is still evident, known or implied, the individual's personhood remains intact.**
HAD alternative words	In order always to be cognisant of the fact that these 'human remains' are an individual person, the principal alternative word should simply be **the deceased, the deceased person** or **the dead**. Where it is necessary to emphasise the bodily aspect of that person, HAD suggests: • Ancestral body • Physical evidence of a deceased person • Physicality or trace of a deceased ancestor • Tangible, evident, bodily or physical aspects of being.
Implications	Interactions with the deceased must always be respectful. HAD advocates for the use of person-centred alternative terminology in oral and written contexts.
Ancestors	
Dictionary Definition	'A person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended.' *Oxford English Dictionary*

[1] DCMS 'Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (2005)', *Human remains:* In this guidance the term human remains is used to mean the bodies, and parts of bodies, of once living people from the species *Homo sapiens* (defined as individuals who fall within the range of anatomical forms known today and in the recent past). This includes osteological material (whole or part skeletons, individual bones or fragments of bone and teeth), soft tissue including organs and skin, embryos and slide preparations of human tissue.

Discussion	The term ancestor usually implies a demonstrable blood connection and therefore is limited by the extent of possible proof. The ancestors, considered more generally, are objectified for academic study. (See note on the DCMS below.)
HAD Perspective	Bloodlines, current society and almost all landscapes have been formed by our human ancestors, and continue to be influenced by those ancestors, albeit differently from the way in which living members of the community do so. As such, the ancestors with whom we share the environment, the landscape and the mundane and spiritual experience of being human, are in many respects as important as the ancestors of our bloodline. Some cultures and spiritual or religious communities will have a stronger experience, and more visceral or practical beliefs in this regard. These groups' views must be taken into consideration when heritage bodies are dealing with any deceased persons, whether there are provable links of genetic descendance or not.
Implications	No proven genetic or cultural connection is required in order to express a valid interest in ancestors interred in the local landscape of a community, of a person's home environment or their sacred temples.
Reburial	
Discussion	The reburial of deceased persons is often equated with the destruction or permanent loss of a material object that has potential scientific value. Another term often used with reference to reburial is 'disposal', again connoting an irrecoverable discarding of physical matter.
Further positive words	Return, repatriation
HAD Perspective	It is important to remember the dead. By remembering those who have lived before us, we are acknowledging their ongoing presence and influence within a community. When we fail to remember them, we separate ourselves from the lessons of the past and compromise the integrity and future of a community. The deceased should not be exhumed unless circumstances necessitate it, for example, where the place of burial is being destroyed by development. However, what is 'necessary' should be decided by consultation. Where exhumation has been agreed as necessary or is unavoidable, there is a validity in studying the tangible evidence and, in doing so, bringing the deceased's story

	back into the living memory of a community. However, this does not justify unconditional retention of the deceased's physicality. The deceased individual has the right to be returned to a state of rest. Although it may not be possible to reproduce the burial circumstances exactly, the following are critical elements to be considered when decisions are made: the deceased's original funereal intent and expectations, the physical connection with the land within which they were found, and the feelings and wishes of the living community of that landscape. Return and Repatriation – where someone is being held at a location away from the place of their original interment, calls for return or repatriation may have been made by interested parties. These requests should be given serious consideration, and honoured wherever appropriate, whether these are from overseas or within the UK. Recognising that it is not always possible, HAD asserts that the best outcome in most cases is for the deceased to be returned to the earth through reburial. Without this return, the natural decay of the body is prevented, and the deceased's reconnection with nature's cycle of death and rebirth is denied.
Implications	**A healthy society is one that remembers and respects its dead.** This includes acknowledging original funereal intent and prioritising a sense of peace. Collective understanding and appreciation of its ancestors helps bring cohesion to a society; returning the deceased to the land through reburial affirms a community's connection with its environment and historic self. In most cases, this means that reburial is the most respectful option for those who have been exhumed, particularly when the potential for scientific or academic study is limited. Duty of care to the dead, therefore, should require regular reviews of all retained deceased persons, including considering opportunities for reburial. HAD's guidance on consultation and reburial can be found here: https://www.honour.org.uk/resources/.

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