



THE
PREHISTORIC
SOCIETY
SINCE 1935

The leading organisation for people interested in prehistory

Swindon Council Leader
Councillor Mr David Renard
(by email)

August 2nd 2021

Dear Councillor Renard

Re Swindon Museum

The Prehistoric Society is dedicated to furthering the understanding of our global prehistoric past and conserving prehistoric remains for the future. Our members are passionately interested in many prehistoric sites, museum collections and excavations both in Britain and abroad.

I am writing with regard to Swindon Museum and Art Gallery which I understand is being considered for closure, prior to reopening in a new cultural quarter by 2030. I am writing to urge you to keep the museum open, with the collections and curators accessible to the public. Closing for nearly a decade will be a very serious blow and deprive a generation of schoolchildren access to learning from the collections and curators.

Museums are invaluable resources for schoolchildren, and with pandemic restrictions gradually lifting, it will be more important than ever to provide access to museums and their collections. Much can be learnt on line of course, but a lifetimes fascination can come from coming face to face with objects, whether they be geological, botanical or archaeological. Many professional archaeologists, natural historians and geologists were first inspired by school visits to museums.

Skilled curators bring the objects alive, and the Swindon Museum collection contains important prehistoric material dating from the Lower Palaeolithic, the time of our first ancestors. Revealing deep time to children also brings them face to face with the evolution of our species, and concepts of race and global migration – subjects of great relevance and indeed conflict today. Your museum can help children learn and navigate these difficult themes and give them the understanding and empathy needed into today's society.

I am mindful of the very difficult circumstances of the past year, and that the museum needs some repair and maintenance, but I urge you to retain an accessible museum now, rather than closing it for nearly a decade.

By closing the museum, you will close the possibilities for visitors, particularly schoolchildren, being able to physically engage with material left by our ancestors and reach a true understanding what makes us human. You will show yourselves to have closed your minds to the possibilities of learning from the past.

Yours faithfully

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Cc Councillor Mr Robert Jandy and the Right Honorable Member of Parliament Robert Buckland
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