Council Leader Linda Taylor

Cornwall Council

Truro

(by email: cllr.linda.taylor@cornwall.gov.uk)

July 7th 2022

Dear Councillor Taylor

*Re Royal Cornwall 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 the proposals to close the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro.

I understand that funding is being cut to the museum, along with the Courtney Library, which is extremely concerning. One of our former council members is currently volunteering at the museum and she has told me of the exceptional response the museum put on during the pandemic. This included placing resources online and taking the museum onto the streets of Truro, continuing to engage local people and visitors with the stories of Cornwall and its deep heritage. I understand the new management team are extremely proactive in designing and preparing new exhibitions and finding ways to engage imaginatively with the public. This is a fine museum, and one to support as a positive asset for Cornwall, and its culture and heritage.

Museums are invaluable resources for the public, particularly schoolchildren, for whom a museum visit can be hugely inspirational, and can lead to crucial life choices. Engaging with objects hand-on, and discussing them with expert curators and volunteers interpreting the past often leads to a lifetimes fascination with history and archaeology. Removing this possibility from children will be a deeply-felt blow to teachers, parents and the children themselves.

Your collections give an exceptionally detailed account of Cornwall’s prehistory, and are of great importance to researchers, particularly for the Neolithic and Bronze Age. This was a period of seismic shift in society, as migrants travelled from the European mainland to find a new home and community here. These are important stories which resonate today with the movement of peoples across Europe. Your curators will already be telling these stories, and telling them to modern migrant and refugee children – is now the time to reduce your ability to link the present to the past and demonstrate our shared humanity?

Furthermore, the museum is the county repository for archaeological material recovered from excavation within the county. Developer-led excavation generates important archives which need to available for research, and deposition of these archives is linked to planning conditions. The inability to deposit archives may hold up planning discharge and add delays to development within the county.

I am mindful of the difficult circumstances of the past two years, however, closing the museum will close doors to researchers and will close minds to the importance of Cornwall’s heritage. It will reduce revenue to the local area and affect the cultural offer within Truro. It will also have a devastating impact upon the strong core of volunteers and will deprive schoolchildren of visits that would otherwise enrich their lives. I urge you to maintain funding to the museum.

Yours faithfully

Professor Linda Hurcombe

President, The Prehistoric Society

Cc The Right Honorable Member of Parliament Cherilyn Mackrory: cherilyn.mackrory.mp@parliament.uk