

Lindow Man Consultation
Saturday 10th February 2007

Report

1. Introduction

On Saturday 10th February 2007 a meeting was held at the Manchester Museum to consult with archaeologists, museum curators, community representatives, members of local archaeological societies and Pagans about the exhibition of Lindow Man. The British Museum has agreed to lend the body of Lindow Man to the Manchester Museum between April 2008 and March 2009. The Museum has already run two very successful Lindow Man exhibitions in 1987 and 1991 and this will be the third occasion on which he has returned to the North West.

Since those earlier exhibitions the Manchester Museum has introduced new ways of working in the development of its temporary and permanent displays, which place more emphasis on inclusiveness, on consultation and on making publicly visible the processes by which we create exhibitions. The museum accepts that it does not hold a monopoly on the interpretation of the objects it puts on display and that there is no one single authoritative voice which speaks through the displays. This reflects changes in the theory of knowledge or epistemology and in approaches to exhibition both within the museums profession as a whole and within the Manchester Museum.

Consultation with stakeholders is integral to the Museum's practice and an essential prerequisite of developing exhibitions and other projects. However, the Museum cannot guarantee to put into practice all of the suggestions that are made. This is simply a question of being realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available. At some point decisions have to be taken and it is the responsibility of the Museum as project leader to take those decisions, especially where there may be competing views. That does not in any way invalidate the consultation process. All of the suggestions made are potentially of interest to the Museum and the principle of consultation is at the heart of how we develop exhibitions.

2. The Organization of the consultation

The Manchester Museum uses consultation sessions with staff, the general public and special interest groups as a way of developing ideas for exhibitions and other projects. The Lindow Man consultation followed a similar model and invited a range of interested parties to take part in the discussion. It was different, however, in deliberately bringing about discussion between people with potentially very different, even conflicting points of view. It was important for the Museum to

bring together a range of interested parties in order to talk to each other about Lindow Man. Pagans for instance have often been dismissed by the archaeological community and yet the success of the Museum's 'Respect for Ancient British Human Remains' conference on 17th November 2006 showed the benefits of constructive dialogue between people who hold different world views.¹ The Respect conference is very relevant to the consultation about Lindow Man because it explored the philosophical frameworks which underlie the different and potentially conflicting attitudes of archaeologists and Pagans towards human remains. The approaches that were adopted for the Lindow Man consultation reflect the contributions by the various speakers and the discussions during the earlier Respect conference. For that reason it is worth including here a short summary of those papers and discussions.

Archaeologists have tended to treat human remains as objects because of a materialist/dualist world view which arose during the 18th century Enlightenment. Put simply there is a separation between spirit and matter. However, from an animist world view, the moral status of the dead person continues; the dead person remains part of the community, a part of the landscape and an ancestor. An animist world view does not accept that there is a division between spirit and matter. According to animists human remains from whatever origin retain spiritual importance. Animists believe that human remains must be treated in an appropriate way. Some archaeologists consider those holding different world-views as unrepresentative and accuse them of frustrating legitimate scientific research on the material evidence. On the other hand the archaeological profession has itself been accused of putting the material record above all other concerns and ignoring the concerns of those for whom the remains have spiritual value. One of the messages of the Respect conference was that Pagan groups should be included in consultations by museums and archaeologists when ancient burials are chosen for excavation and that they could work with curators to bring about more respectful treatment of human remains in museums. This is part of an ongoing debate opened up by the Manchester Museum, involving Pagans, archaeologists, museum professionals and other communities. This is intended to build a sustainable relationship in which dialogue can take place between those holding different world views.

It was in the light of this conference that the Manchester Museum wished to bring together representatives of different points of view and to bring about dialogue between them in connection with the Lindow Man project. After a welcome from Professor Piotr Bienkowski, Deputy Director, and a short introduction to Lindow Man by Bryan Sitch, Head of Humanities at the Manchester Museum, the participants divided up into five sub-groups each of seven or eight people to discuss what they thought the main interpretative strands or storylines should be for the Lindow Man exhibition. In each of these groups there were several archaeologists, museum curators and Pagans, a community representative and

¹ For further information about the Respect Conference see the Manchester Museum website at www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/ourpractice/respect

someone from the university or higher education. After two hours discussion there was a break for refreshments and the sub-groups reconvened in the Museum's lecture theatre to share their findings. A spokesperson from each sub-group presented the conclusions and these were summarised on a flip chart.

3. Key Statements

Whilst the organizers might have been forgiven for anticipating some sharp disagreements, in fact not only was there a remarkable degree of unanimity between the conclusions of the different sub-groups, but everyone commented on the cordiality of the discussions. There was considerable agreement over the approach to the exhibition and the way in which Lindow Man should be treated. In the following summary of the group discussions the key statements have been listed under broad heading.

3.1 Intellectual Stance

There was broad consensus that the approach to Lindow Man should reflect how much we do not know about him and that there are different points of view and different interpretations of what happened to him, i.e. Lindow Man could mean different things to different people and there was no one universally accepted interpretation that was authoritative.

- We should have defined learning outcomes. At the heart of these should be values that emphasize that there are different levels of recognition of the past. These values change to give us changing notions of the importance of the past. They enhance our sense of connection to the past and give it relevance. The exhibition should be reflective and contemplative.
- There should be key messages but don't overload visitors!
- The exhibition should explore alternative points of view, including archaeological interpretation and more spiritual perspectives. It should be a questioning exhibit, particularly if there are few hard and fast facts or if the facts are disputed. It should not tell people but admit that there are some things we do not know. It could question the sensationalist glamorous interpretation of Lindow Man. There should be stories and contradictory stories.
- What do we know about him? How is it he is defined by his place of death and burial? We should admit how little we really know about him.
- Use Lindow Man to think about the links between us and people 2000 years ago. It should be a one-on-one experience. The essence of the exhibit is that it should be [spiritually] moving.

- There's something ambiguous about Lindow Man. He's an ancestor: but what sort of person was he? Some native peoples mutilate their dead by breaking limbs or separating parts of their bodies to prevent them returning to this world. Some remove their name. Some even keep relics of that dead person with them in the community. But all this is a sign of being different in some way, either in a positive or a negative way. Lindow Man could have had multiple alternative lives. We should engage the public imagination and create a forum to relate to him. Maybe we should have creative writing activities.
- Juxtapose stories – was he a handsome Druid prince or a Roman captive?

3.2 Spirituality

There was broad agreement that the approach taken to Lindow Man needed to reflect that he had been a living human being and that he was most definitely a 'he' and not an 'it', that he was an ancestor and that he must be treated with sensitivity (see below). People felt that there is a spiritual dimension to Lindow Man and how he is treated on display, which also extends to allowing visitors to demonstrate their respect for him as an ancestor.

- The Museum should explore the option to create a shrine near the Lindow Man exhibition where people could make offerings to the ancestors, of which Lindow Man is a representative but not make offerings *to* Lindow Man.
- A Pagan perspective on Lindow Man is very important. We want to emphasize his humanity. He certainly is not a museum object.
- Lindow Man's discovery and excavation was an intersection of then and now, of us and him, that is still on-going, evolving and certainly not over.

3.3 The Sensitive Treatment of Lindow Man

Again there was a lot of agreement about the need to display Lindow Man sensitively, even giving visitors a choice as to whether or not they want to see him. This potentially affects the way in which visitors will view other human remains in the museum such as the skull of Worsley Man (a decision has since been made to remove the skull of Worsley Man from display) and the Egyptian mummies:

- People should have the choice as to whether to see Lindow Man or not.
- Lindow Man should be treated in a dignified manner. He is a man, a person.

- There should be links to other galleries in the museum where human remains are displayed so that people can make a comparison between different approaches to displaying human remains.

3.4 Repatriation

This was potentially the most contentious issue of the discussions. Some people feel that the exhibition could become the springboard for a campaign to repatriate Lindow Man to the North West, others feel that however much they sympathised with the wish to bring him back, the BM had acquired him over 20 years ago and there was little that could be done now to change things. One person commented that the Museum should have a stance on the repatriation issue because it certainly would be raised by the media during the exhibition.

- Support for repatriation of Lindow Man's remains differs depending on which group you belong to but it was felt it could be an undercurrent within the exhibition, made overt in places.
- We want to make careful use of the exhibition in order to make people more aware of this issue. He is ours. The exhibition should at the very least tell the story of why he is in the British Museum, not in the North-West, and why some communities want him returned to the North-West.

3.5 Tradition/Continuity

Underline the continuity between ourselves and our ancestors, of whom Lindow Man is such an astonishing survival. The traditions which keep alive this relationship of continuity are very important in creating a sense of identity in a changing and challenging world. They reflect a more spiritual approach to human remains.

- Lindow Man helps us think about what is important. What do we want to remember? What should be remembered? Where do we fit in the on-going story that draws upon tradition and our ancestors? Lindow Man can help us and help future generations.
- We're his guardians.

3.6 A sense of place

There was a lot of consensus that Lindow the place is important and that it deserves to have a place in the exhibition:

- Lindow Moss is important as a place. The exhibition should seek to make links with Lindow, promote a sense of place. Man and landscape are inseparable. Use sight, sound, smell, textures and video to create something evocative.

- The ecology of Lindow and other mosses is important and shouldn't be side-lined. Look at other mosses and wetlands in the North West. The environmental issues surrounding the ecology, use of, and extraction of peat were of fundamental interest, linked as they are to sustainability and climate change.
- Use full-size pictures of Lindow Moss.

3.7 Interpretation

This heading has been used to describe the various suggestions made about the themes and methods used to explore what Lindow Man means to people:

- Would it be possible to use computer aided or modern technology to have an interview with Lindow Man?
- Collect people's memories, involve local school groups and publish it as a book.
- We should look at associated artefacts, other burials, other bog bodies/finds. There is an international dimension. Bodies in bogs are a phenomenon. We should invite academics from elsewhere. How were the others found, how were they treated? Are they treated with respect?
- Explore other offerings through water.
- Create a picture of settlement and agriculture. Who else was living in this landscape?
- Even if we don't know the exact date we can at least put Lindow Man in a broader context of water offerings from prehistory to the modern day.
- Invite re-enactment groups to perform as part of the exhibition.
- There's a second body from Lindow Moss and potentially even another body.
- Do a "CSI Iron Age". The forensic techniques used to make sense of Lindow Man could be explored by schools and the public.

3.8 Organization of the Lindow Man exhibition

Most of the groups also commented about the physical arrangement of the space used in the Lindow Man exhibition:

- The Museum should consider also using the foyer area outside the Temporary Exhibition Gallery so that more space is available.
- The exhibition of Lindow Man should be linear. Lindow Man should be at the end of the exhibition on his own with no interpretation. At the start we should deal with his discovery as if it were a murder case, then move on to the archaeological excavations, explore the different interpretations made of him and then look at what he means today.
- The way he is exhibited should be like a sanctuary and intimate. We should limit the numbers of people perhaps by ticketing or track numbers to know how many people are going through.
- There should be sound effects and visuals inside the sanctuary, e.g. projecting images of a moss environment which could change seasonally from day to night and seasonally to give a sense of time passing.
- The exhibition could be designed so that Lindow Man is in his sealed display unit (a round one rather than a square one?) in a dimly lit room. Visitors can decide whether they wish to go into the room to see him. After seeing him they can sit down in a relaxing environment, a kind of chill-out zone with pictures of Lindow Moss on the walls and relaxing music to come to terms with what they've seen and even think about their own mortality.

3.9 Associated events & activities

Many people felt that we ought to mark the arrival of Lindow Man with special events and activities as well as marking his eventual departure:

- The arrival of Lindow Man in Manchester should be an occasion for a major celebration to welcome him 'home' and conversely his departure back to London should be marked.
- Invite Alan Garner to open the exhibit. Run painting workshops. Run a guided tour to Lindow for members of the public – "Lindow Lite" and a more academic visit to the moss.
- Run dayschool on related topics such as other bog bodies, sacrifice and understanding sacrifice.
- Iron Age pot making, weaving, lathe turning.
- Involve the community by seeing if it might be possible to do some forensic provenancing à la Julian Richards. Does he have any descendants still in the area?

- Hold a formal debate – what does Lindow Man mean to different communities, and where should he go?
- Create a public forum where Lindow Man can be discussed.
- Take Lindow Man out on the road to schools and church halls to give more access. [note that this suggestion is almost certainly not feasible under the terms of the loan from the British Museum – we would be unable to control and guarantee his conservation conditions and security]
- What happens to Lindow Man once he's returned to the BM? Will there be follow-up exhibitions? Worsley Man is similar in many ways to Lindow Man.
- Put his name on buses: "Back to Lindow Man".

3.10 Wider issues

I have used this as a broad catch-all heading to list those suggestions which do not sit well on their own and which take us to a more philosophical dimension, in which Lindow Man's role goes beyond that of the centrepiece of an exhibition and helps us to address far wider concerns, like mortality, diversity, local and regional identity and even the mind-set of the suicide bomber:

- Lindow Man could be used to raise the issue of how we treat death in modern 21st century society.
- Lindow Man could be a community ambassador. If schools, children and students can be taught to appreciate his way of life, some sense of his spiritual values in so far as they can be reconstructed from 2000 years ago, how much easier might it be for the same children to understand a present day religion or culture?
- It is not just a question of the relationship between Manchester and London but of Manchester and the North West. Many things have changed since 1991. How have we changed since his discovery? At the time the expertise and the facilities did not exist here to look after Lindow Man. Are they available now?
- We tend to think of him as having been a victim but from the world view of the people and of Lindow Man himself this death could have been a great honour. Some people today see sacrificing themselves for a cause to be a virtuous act. This has modern significance.

4. Towards a design brief

What came out of the day was extremely gratifying for the Museum because it gave a clear sense of direction. Many of the groups made the same or similar points. The discussions in the sub-groups had focused upon Lindow Man and his interpretation within a framework which seeks to celebrate his spiritual significance and requires him to be displayed in a sensitive manner. What was particularly interesting was that whereas some archaeologists have characterised the Pagan stance as one monopolised by the desire to rebury human remains, archaeological interpretation was seen by Pagan participants as very much enhancing Lindow Man's significance as an ancestor – telling his stories – provided it was done in a sensitive way.

There was broad agreement that sensitive treatment in this case would be to display Lindow Man in a separate area towards the end of the exhibition in a room without interpretation, in which the space and the lighting was controlled in such a way so as to slow down perception and to lengthen the encounter with him. Lindow Man might be displayed in a round display case to emphasise his organic pre-Industrial character. There should be a corridor for anyone not wanting to see him and a room afterwards (the “Chill Zone”) in which visitors could sit and think about what they had seen and perhaps to consider their own mortality. This reflective, contemplative approach enhances Lindow Man's spiritual significance as an ancestor and is important not only to the Pagan contributors but to many other people too. There is also the question of his relationship with the landscape and the importance of green issues in present day society. Potentially there are wider issues involving ethnic diversity, regional identity and even terrorism.

The interpretation of the body and supporting objects from the museum collections should lead up to Lindow Man. The exhibits should include artefacts deposited in watery sites to venerate aquatic deities, stone heads and other material which help create a picture of the Iron Age world of Lindow Man. The consultation also showed that there was a lot of interest in Lindow Moss the place, in the ecology of peat and in its liminality as a place between worlds, neither dry land nor wet, unique, fragile, magical and utterly fascinating. A wide range of suggestions were made for supporting events and activities, including craft activities, lectures and a debate or public forum.

The question of lack of certainty comes up in the interpretive approach too with a number of groups stressing that much of what we know about Lindow Man is debated, even contested, and that there are many points of view.

The most contentious issue appears to be that of repatriation, the question being whether or not the exhibition should be part of a campaign aimed at bringing Lindow Man back to the North West for good, or whether at the very least the issue of repatriation is an undercurrent which sometimes comes to the surface of the exhibition. Within the exhibition itself, it is appropriate to tell the story of why

and how Lindow Man went to the British Museum, about the previous repatriation campaigns, and why many communities would still like him returned.

5. What happens next

- The Museum feels that very strong and agreed themes came through the consultation process, and these are reflected in this report. The Museum intends to develop the design of the Lindow Man exhibition on the basis of the framework described in this report. We therefore ask all the consultees to let us know if they ratify this report, which would give the Museum a broad base of agreement on which to develop the exhibition. Please send me your responses no later than Friday 23rd March, preferably by email.
- If there is any substantial disagreement, we will need to consider how best to tackle it, whether by email or by organising another meeting. Email discussion would be preferable given the timescale: ideally, the Museum needs to start developing the design brief by mid-April 2007.
- If the report is ratified, the Museum will develop the design brief based on the recommendations of the report. Once this is complete, an outline will be circulated to all consultees, as a further check and part of the process of ratification, to ensure that the Museum is still developing the exhibition along the lines discussed. Again, if there are substantial disagreements, we will either pursue them by email or by arranging a further meeting, depending on the nature of the issue and the schedule. We expect to have an outline design brief for circulation in summer or early autumn, once the Museum's new Curator of Temporary and Touring Exhibitions is appointed.

THANK YOU all very much for your very generous help and input. The Manchester Museum is enormously grateful for your participation.

Bryan Sitch,
Head of Humanities,
The Manchester Museum

Appendix

The Manchester Museum

Lindow Man Consultation – List of Invitees
February 10th 2007

Group A

Emma Restall Orr (P)
Martin Evans (P)
Matthew Hyde (MM)
Julie Ashforth (Comm)
Mike Nevell (A)
Jean Fildes (STAG)
Ken Booth (Saddleworth)

Group B

Phil Ryder (P)
Gordon McLellan (P)
Sue Wardell (P)
Bryan Sitch (MM)
Karina Croucher (A)
Tiffany Jenkins (A)
Cllr Paul Murphy (MCC)

Group C

Dave Wardell (P)
Sarah Males (P)
Piotr Bienkowski (MM)
Jody Joy (BM)
Robina McNeil (A)
Laura Crossley (V)
David Chadderton (Saddleworth)

Group D

Derek Stormwolf (P)
Linda Sever (P)
John Prag (MM)
Helen Rees-Leahy (MusA)
Brian Ayers (A)
Jude Seath (KNH)
Stephen Towers (V)
Stephen Walsh (MM)

Group E

John Lamb (P)

Gary Oakes (P)

Jon Cole (P)

Micahla Hill (MM)

Melanie Hind (A)

Kerry Beeston (MM)

Miss Trippetti (CAP)