

## Vale and Downland Museum Human Remains Policy

Date on which this policy was approved: 5 September 2022

Date at which this policy is due for renewal: 5 September 2027

### Introduction

This policy sets out how the Museum curates, researches and displays the human remains in its care.

In the UK, the practice of excavating historic and prehistoric human remains, studying them and including them in museum collections is well-established. The Museum recognises that human remains are sometimes regarded as culturally sensitive.

### Collections

The Vale and Downland Museum holds collections of Social History and Archaeology relating to Wantage and the Vale of White Horse, built up by bequest, purchase and gifts over the past fifty years. It uses them for education, inspiration and enjoyment through public displays at the Museum.

### Definition of human remains

The definition used in this policy refers to skeletal and soft tissue parts of *Homo sapiens*, including hair and nails, and artefacts made of human and other components.

### **Policy on human remains**

#### *Acquisition*

In accordance with its acquisition policy the Vale & Downland Museum will not acquire human remains. The Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre at Standlake is the designated repository for archaeological site archives for the County.

#### *Display*

The Vale and Downland Museum may include human remains in its galleries and displays. Careful consideration will be given to the purpose and circumstances of displaying human remains. Such displays will be accompanied by explanatory and contextual information. Further consideration will be given to prepare visitors for the display, so that the remains are viewed respectfully and can be avoided by those who do not wish to see them.

The wishes of museum staff and volunteers preferring not to work with and handle human remains will be respected.