

Representation RE Haycombe Crematorium at the Full Cabinet Meeting of B&NES Cabinet, Guildhall, 14 Mar 2012, by Hugh Mackay

I very much appreciate the time I've been given, and that our present council wants to be known as a **listening council**, taking into consideration the views of the people you serve.

I have been in communication with literally hundreds of people in Bath over the past 2-3 weeks since the refurbishment of the Haycombe Crematorium was revealed by the Bath Chronicle, and this has evoked an outcry **to keep the cross** in the window there. I came across only three did not oppose its removal, and I acknowledge the rights of those who might not want it. But, why should the rights of three dictate the policy and deny comfort and inspiration to thousands of others who want it? Can we not build on the principle of consensus in our democracy?

I am told that "Despite what the Daily Mail says, the windows in the Crematorium are not being removed for reasons of **political correctness**, but because they need to be replaced as part of a **general refurbishment**." If they are not being taken out to be politically correct but for refurbishment, then it should go back as previously – otherwise, it is **not truly replacing, but a change of purpose**.

The delicate etching of the cross against the backdrop of the Englishcombe valley is a **work of art in its own right**. It would be a travesty to destroy it. Should any work of art be destroyed for fear of offence? That is not a principle our tolerant democracy is founded on.

The cross is a very powerful and **comforting symbol for many**, reminding us of both life on earth and the life to come; a crucial factor when many come to the chapel at some of the hardest points of their earthly lives. The cross offers comfort and hope in the resurrection to all people – whether believers or non-believers alike – who have used it for over 50 years without any objection. If there was no planned refurbishment, would the council – at this time – still be removing the cross?

Churches from every denomination and tradition in Bath (Protestant, Catholic and Nonconformist) have united in desiring the retention of the cross in the window and I have brought here today a **petition containing a staggering [4862](#) signatures** gathered in a very short time, protesting against its removal.

If there is a **small minority** who use the chapel but don't wish to see a cross, they could always pull down the blind that is there. Since it was installed 18 months ago, only 6 funeral parties have asked for it to be pulled down out of a possible 3,000 (98%) who were not concerned.

In contrast, by removing the cross, **the majority are offended** as it would devalue the chapel. Surely, "the greatest good of the greatest number should be the sole end of political action." The council, with all due respect, has not consulted properly on this issue. Letters to the local paper better reflects the majority view, as does this petition. I therefore request that the matter be fully discussed in council and with local clergy.

This is still a Christian country, and our **Christian heritage** warrants respect, particularly in Bath, with its long Christian tradition. For the people of this city, the symbol of the cross is of intrinsic value and the bottom line is this: **Is the cross really offensive?**

Members of the council, I ask you to **rethink** the window replacement and **stop it now**, because this petition represents a widely held view in our city, angry by the desecration of what many regard to be a sacred and comforting place, made so by that cross.

Thank you all for your time.