

May 20th, 2021

PRESS STATEMENT

THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE RHODES STATUE DELIVERS ITS REPORT

The independent Commission established by Oriel College, Oxford, to consider issues raised by its association with Cecil Rhodes has made a number of substantial recommendations to the College's Governing Body concerning the College's Rhodes legacy and memorials, as well as recommendations aimed at furthering educational equality, diversity and inclusion amongst its students and academic community.

The Commission was established following a decision by Oriel College last year (17th June 2020), when the Governing Body expressed its wish to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, which is situated on the College's Grade II* listed High Street Building, and the King Edward Street plaque to Rhodes. The Commission was also tasked with considering 'the issue of the Rhodes legacy and how to improve access and attendance of BAME undergraduate [and] graduate students and faculty, together with a review of how the College's 21st Century commitment to diversity can sit more easily with its past.'

The Commission hopes that the recommendations in its report will help the Governing Body reach its stated aim of achieving a 'serious, appropriate and productive resolution of a complex series of issues.' It was unanimous in putting forward all of these recommendations. In respect of the future of the Rhodes statue, a majority of Commission members supported the expressed wish of the Governing Body to move it. There was a minority view that it was not the role of the Commission to comment on the Governing Body's vote but rather to provide all relevant information to enable a final decision to be taken.

The full set of recommendations can be found in the Commission's report, published on its website, here: : <https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/files/orielrhodescommissionfullreportpdf>

Acknowledgements

Carole Souter CBE, Chair of the Independent Commission, said: "I would like to express my personal gratitude to each of the Commissioners for giving freely of their time and expertise to undertake this important and painstaking work. Each of them made a significant contribution to the conclusions of the Commission, contributing their knowledge and expertise to help advise how the Rhodes legacy can best be acknowledged in the future of Oriel College.

"I would also like to pay tribute to the contribution made by Peter Ainsworth, whose death, shortly after we had finalised the report's recommendations, was a terrible shock to all Commissioners. He was a passionate advocate for heritage and the environment and will be greatly missed."

Full details of the Commission and its members can be found here: www.oriel-rhodes-commission.co.uk)

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