# Herefordshire councillor accuses museum event of woke virtue-signalling amid misinformation debate



A councillor in Herefordshire has sparked controversy with his outspoken criticism of an upcoming event aimed at addressing the complex issues surrounding fake news and misinformation in museums. Cllr Ewen Sinclair branded the event a platform for "woke virtue-signalling," asserting that it reflects a broader trend of political correctness that hinders genuine discourse.

The event, titled “Contentious Narratives,” is part of a series hosted by the Herefordshire Council’s museums and galleries department. It is designed to encourage local residents to engage in discussions about how museums can responsibly respond to contentious histories while navigating the treacherous waters of misinformation. Damian Etheraads, head of the department, stated the aim is to “present complex or controversial subjects with integrity,” while avoiding becoming overly dogmatic. Etheraads emphasised that the discussions are intended to inform the design of displays for the city’s new £18-million museum and art gallery, reflecting community values and interests.

Despite the stated goals of the event, Sinclair expressed skepticism through a Facebook post, suggesting that attendees would be directed rather than genuinely engaged in a conversation. “He is going to discuss ‘fake’ news and ‘misinformation’. Anyone who says disinformation and misinformation is probably lying,” Sinclair commented, urging residents to challenge the views of Etheraads, whom he labelled as self-promoting and wasteful of taxpayers' money. The council has countered this narrative, stating that the assembly, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, will not dictate thoughts but will provide a valuable opportunity for local voices to influence the future of the museum.

The discourse surrounding the event falls within a broader context of ongoing debates about freedom of speech, political correctness, and the dissemination of information. An examination of similar initiatives, such as a recent exhibition at the Museum of London which explored the historical underpinnings of fake news—including notable hoaxes like the Cottingley Fairies— underscores the importance of understanding the impact of misinformation on society. This exhibition highlighted not only the sheer longevity of misinformation but also its evolution in the age of social media, where false narratives can spread rapidly.

The challenges faced by institutions aiming to navigate these treacherous waters have been documented in several scholarly discussions. An academic paper addressing the ethical implications of political correctness posits that while striving for inclusive dialogue, there is a risk of stifling free speech and authentic engagement. These tensions are particularly pronounced in public forums where the balance between promoting progressive values and maintaining open discourse is often contentious.

Moreover, discussions surrounding the role and responsibilities of museums and galleries in responding to contemporary issues tend to reflect broader societal concerns. As communities grapple with painful histories and challenging narratives, the task of presenting these stories becomes increasingly complex. A recent book, 'After the Fact?: The Truth About Fake News', delves into how misinformation has evolved and its profound implications for public opinion and democratic processes.

With the "Contentious Narratives" event slated for June 7 at the History Store in Hereford, the tension between Sinclair's portrayal and the council's intentions will likely fuel ongoing debates about how institutions can responsibly engage the public in critical discussions about truth, narratives, and the legacies of misinformation.

As the construction of the new museum nears commencement, the outcome of these initial discussions could set a significant precedent for how Herefordshire's cultural institutions navigate the intricate interplay of fact and fiction in contemporary society.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://hellorayo.co.uk/hits-radio/birmingham/news/hereford-museum-councillor-woke), [[4]](https://www.academia.edu/63246253/Political_correctness_in_a_global_age_The_ethical_implications_of_a_hegemonic_discourse)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://hellorayo.co.uk/hits-radio/birmingham/news/hereford-museum-councillor-woke), [[5]](https://ebin.pub/after-the-fact-the-truth-about-fake-news-9781912248735.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/long_reads/fake-news-exhibition-opens-with-very-real-facts-about-its-history-a8072156.html), [[6]](https://www.inkl.com/news/fake-news-an-exhibition-on-the-importance-of-accurate-journalism)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://dailysceptic.org/2025/02/13/news-round-up-1433/), [[4]](https://www.academia.edu/63246253/Political_correctness_in_a_global_age_The_ethical_implications_of_a_hegemonic_discourse)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://hellorayo.co.uk/hits-radio/birmingham/news/hereford-museum-councillor-woke), [[5]](https://ebin.pub/after-the-fact-the-truth-about-fake-news-9781912248735.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://hellorayo.co.uk/hits-radio/birmingham/news/hereford-museum-councillor-woke> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/long_reads/fake-news-exhibition-opens-with-very-real-facts-about-its-history-a8072156.html> - An exhibition at the Museum of London explores the history of fake news, highlighting instances like the Cottingley Fairies hoax and the spread of misinformation about Jeremy Corbyn's alleged refusal to bow to the Queen. The exhibition aims to educate the public on the long-standing issue of fake news and its impact on society.
3. <https://dailysceptic.org/2025/02/13/news-round-up-1433/> - A roundup of recent news, including reports on NHS staff considering reporting a nurse for 'misgendering' a trans doctor, criticism of NHS trusts promoting 'woke' activism despite funding cuts, and discussions on the removal of trigger warnings by Disney. The article also touches on the debate over cultural appropriation in literature and a city's vote to become a 'Sanctuary City for Transgender and Gender Diverse People'.
4. <https://www.academia.edu/63246253/Political_correctness_in_a_global_age_The_ethical_implications_of_a_hegemonic_discourse> - An academic paper examining the ethical implications of political correctness in a global context. It discusses how political correctness has become a hegemonic discourse and its impact on freedom of speech and expression. The paper also explores the role of political correctness in shaping public discourse and its influence on societal norms.
5. <https://ebin.pub/after-the-fact-the-truth-about-fake-news-9781912248735.html> - A book titled 'After the Fact?: The Truth About Fake News' that delves into the history and impact of fake news. It discusses how fake news has evolved over time and its influence on public opinion and politics. The book also examines the role of social media in the spread of misinformation and the challenges in combating fake news.
6. <https://www.inkl.com/news/fake-news-an-exhibition-on-the-importance-of-accurate-journalism> - An article about an exhibition focusing on the importance of accurate journalism and the history of fake news. The exhibition includes examples like the Cottingley Fairies hoax and the War of the Worlds radio broadcast, highlighting how misinformation has been spread throughout history and its impact on society.
7. <https://www.academia.edu/78657902/Parody_Fake_News_Regeneration_and_Education> - An academic paper discussing the role of parody and satire in addressing fake news, regeneration, and education. It explores how trickster figures and satire can be used to challenge authority and expose the ironies in political discourse, particularly in the context of Brexit and other political events.