

Leiden, 21 December 2017

Dear policy-maker in the City of Oulu, Finland as well as on the national Finnish level,

EXARC is the ICOM Affiliated Organisation worldwide representing archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, ancient technology and interpretation. EXARC raises the standard of scientific research and public presentation among its membership through collaborative projects, conferences and publications. We have 300 members in 40 countries. EXARC offers a strong supportive network through which experimental archaeologists and staff at archaeological open-air museums exchange knowledge, experience and best practice. EXARC bridges between academics and museums, between professionals and the seriously interested public.

Kierikkikeskus/Kierikki Stone Age Centre opened in 2001 and has been an active member of our international community since 2008. Especially noteworthy is the role of Kierikki in the OpenArch-project (2011-15) funded by the European Union. This was a cooperation between 11 partners in eight European countries with a budget of about two million Euro. **Kierikki's** role was vital with their made intensive co-operation with the University of Exeter (UK) and several other European institutions. **Kierikki** represented the prehistory and nature of Northern Europe, a perfect spot for international research and tourism. **Kierikki** has a significant international research history with ongoing archaeological excavations. It is one of the most valuable Neolithic environments in Northern Scandinavia which attracts research groups from as far away as Northern America. It is an important centre for school teaching and an excellent place for tourists, attracting people to the region who else would spend their money elsewhere. The work that **Kierikki** has done during the last 20 years for research, popularisation and tourist services are highly ranked in Europe.

the ICOM Affiliated Organisation representing
archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, ancient technology and interpretation

The reconstructed **Stone Age Village**, just 400 metres away from the main building, is a hit among the (between 10,000 and 20,000) annual visitors. This special environment is what makes **Kierikki** an archaeological open-air museum. An archaeological open-air museum is a non-profit permanent institution with outdoor true to scale architectural reconstructions primarily based on archaeological sources. It holds collections of intangible heritage resources and provides an interpretation of how people lived and acted in the past; this is accomplished according to sound scientific methods for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment of its visitors. There are about 750 archaeological open-air museums worldwide proving the success of this concept. We offer an overview of most of them at www.exarc.net/venues. These museums together attract about 25 to 30 million visitors annually and are becoming more successful every year.

It came to our ears that the city of Oulu received a proposition to close down the main building of **Kierikki Stone Age Centre**, which houses the only archaeological exhibition concentrating on Stone Age in Finland. At the same time, the sale of the main building of the Northern Ostrobothnia museum was also proposed. Both of these sales will effectively mean the end of these museums: a huge loss for Finland and at international level. We cannot understand how a municipality like Oulu finds culture that important that it is applying European Capital of Culture in 2026, but equally discusses a proposition to factually close two important museums. There must be a better way to find the savings of about 150,000 EUR which has less dramatic impact on culture in this region and not to forget, on tourism. If the city of Oulu would decide to close the main building of **Kierikkikeskus/Kierikki Stone Age Centre**, one can be sure that this will mean the end of the museum as a whole. The open-air village cannot survive without the museum and its exhibition which will also shut down because of the Finnish legislation for ancient objects. For one, the main building has all the office rooms and facilities for the people working in the museum, a museum shop and a restaurant. Moreover, the main building is used for a variety of events from concerts to lectures and conferences. Because of EU LEADER funding, the **Stone Age Village** cannot be closed until 2023. However, we emphasise again, separating the main building from the open-air museum will mean a definite end of the museum as a whole.

the **ICOM Affiliated Organisation** representing
archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, ancient technology and interpretation

It is the opinion of EXARC, that **Kierikki** is a valuable museum and an internationally well-respected member of our family of archaeological open-air museums and experimental archaeologists. The museum has proven to contribute successfully, both locally, nationally and at European level, to cultural heritage promotion and research, leading to a good reputation for the region and more tourists. We believe this museum should not be slowly choked to its end, but should rather be supported for the long and successful future which lies ahead. A fast gain of only 125,000 EUR will lead to a much larger loss in the end.

Best wishes,



Roeland Paardekooper PhD
EXARC Director