

“Filthy Creatures”

What is the overall theme?

Many animals in the Zoo consume either the waste product or cadavers of other animals. From a naïve and anthropocentric perspective, this can seem repellent disgusting. However a strong case can be made that those forms of life do live off ‘waste’ are actually performing a vital service. The waste removal function is as active and as necessary in Nature, as it is in human society.

Contrast could be made with our contemporary culture. In his natural, pre-agricultural state, Man was hardly ever the ‘noble mammoth hunter’ of cliché, but a scavenger, perhaps in part living off decaying carcasses in an ecological niche quite similar to the Hyena, and so the equal of the other creatures detailed. Conversely this exhibit might also make some reference to modern, man made industrial pollution, and pose the question: *Which version of mankind is actually the ‘Filthier Creature’...?*

What would be the visitor experience?

“Filthy Creatures” would be an exhibit offering a beguiling narrative adventure leading the visitor through an understanding of how different life forms clean up various forms of waste (excrement, dead bodies, what else..?). It might embrace dung beetles, hyenas, a wormery, vultures (extend list) Curatorial staff would ultimately select species according to a number of practicalities, but the choice of animals (as *all* animals consume organic material) would seem very wide providing some kind of consistent message is maintained. It could culminate in a contrast between Neolithic human scavengers and our modern waste culture. In addition to animal displays and sophisticated exhibitry, “Filthy Creatures” could, finance permitting, during very busy periods actually involve human actors.

How is this project aligned with a mission led zoo or similar organisation?

It has a striking message in terms of waste conservation and sustainability. In contrast to rather worthy but dull exhibits or other initiatives preaching re-cycling or other good practice, this very *visceral* experience will immediately engage visitors on a physical level and genuinely catalyse them into thinking about and perhaps modifying their own behaviour.

Why might this be more fundable than conventional approaches?

It plays to at least 3 funding areas:

- Public sector wishing to promote the circular economy

- Commercial interests seeking to underline the undervalued waste management sector
- Grant making trusts focussed on this area

Why would such an approach have strong public and media appeal ?

Subject to proper handling, children's innate interest in the vulgar realities of life and the overall public's horrified fascination could be turned to strong advantage. Media would certainly pick up on such an unusual approach.