

OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF GLASSWORKS SUNDERLAND

TO:

Sunderland City Council
Sunderland Culture
The Rt Hon Lewis Atkinson MP
Members of the Sunderland Culture Board
National and Regional Press

17th February 2026

SUBJECT:

Public Statement of Support from Glassmakers and Ceramicists for the Development of Glassworks Sunderland

We, the undersigned glassmakers and ceramicists working in Sunderland, across the wider UK and internationally, write to state our collective support for the development of Glassworks Sunderland, proposed for the former Peter Smith Antiques site in Sunniside.

This letter is intended as a clear and constructive statement of professional confidence in the project and in the process currently being led by Sunderland Culture to develop a full business case for submission to central government via DCMS. We understand that provisional funding of £5 million is contingent upon the successful completion of this business case by March 2026.

CONTEXT

The closure of the National Glass Centre after 28 years of internationally recognised work in glass art, education, exhibition, outreach, and public engagement is deeply regrettable. Equally significant is the scheduled closure in 2026 of the BA, MA, and PhD programmes in Glass and Ceramics at the University of Sunderland, ending more than four decades of continuous, high-level specialist education.

The achievements of glass and ceramics staff and graduates, many of whom now work internationally, are evident in The Graduates, the final exhibition opening at the National Glass Centre on 30 January. Faculty and NGC staff have played a significant role in establishing Sunderland's international standing through externally facing initiatives such as the Glass Exchange programme and partnerships with organisations including the V&A, Sorrel Foundation and Tradecraft. Together, these activities have positioned Sunderland as a centre for cultural production, skills exchange, and applied research. The contribution of these programmes to British studio glass and ceramics and to the cultural life, civic identity, and heritage of the city cannot be overstated.

We recognise that the University's decision reflects a wider national trend of higher education institutions withdrawing from arts, design, and heritage craft provision. While we do not support this direction, we acknowledge the broader context in which it has occurred.

POSITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED

We acknowledge the efforts of the Campaign to Save the National Glass Centre and their commitment to preventing the loss of an important cultural building. However, we differ from the campaign on a fundamental issue.

As professional glassmakers, educators, technicians, and practitioners with over 4000 years of combined experience, we believe that the primary asset at risk is not a building, but the continuation of glassmaking itself: the skills, knowledge, passionate people, and professional ecology that sustain the practice and its community of makers.

Glassmaking in Sunderland has a documented lineage of over 1,350 years, during which it has existed in

many different buildings, workshops, and industrial contexts. The history of glass in this city has never been defined by a single structure. It has been defined by passionate practice, resilience, adaptability, endeavour, experimentation, and transmission of skills.

From our considered and professional standpoint, the continuation of glassmaking in Sunderland is of greater long-term cultural value than the preservation of a building.

SUPPORT FOR GLASSWORKS SUNDERLAND

For this reason, we fully support the development of Glassworks Sunderland as proposed by Sunderland Culture.

We regard this project as the clearest and most realistic opportunity to:

- retain and develop glassmaking skills within the city
- provide viable production, teaching, and public engagement facilities
- support professional artists, early-career makers, and community access
- retain and grow Sunderland's international reputation as a centre of excellence for glass
- safeguard heritage through active practice rather than passive preservation

Concerns have been raised publicly regarding whether the proposed Sunniside site, formerly Peter Smith Antiques, is "fit for purpose." Assertions that the proposed site is inherently unworkable are not supported by professional evidence or consultation with those who operate such facilities. Glassmakers are, by necessity, resourceful, technically literate, and highly experienced in adapting industrial and commercial buildings for safe, efficient, and creative use. As practitioners, many of us have been directly involved in establishing studios from the ground up across the UK and internationally; we believe that glassmakers themselves are best placed to make informed judgements about functional suitability.

A CLEAR RISK

We are concerned that continued public messaging which characterises the proposed facility as inadequate, risks undermining political and financial confidence in the entire project.

If the current opportunity is lost due to divided public optics, Sunderland faces a genuine risk of moving from a viable, ambitious future for glassmaking to no provision at all.

From our perspective, this would represent the greatest possible loss.

CONCLUSION

We the undersigned therefore state publicly and unequivocally that we:

- support the development of the Glassworks Sunderland business case
- believe the project represents the best available route to sustaining glassmaking in the city
- urge Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Culture, DCMS, and all stakeholders to proceed with confidence
- stand ready, as practitioners, passionate makers, and supportive partners, to contribute our expertise to ensuring the project's success

Glassmaking in Sunderland has survived for more than a millennium through change, adaptation, and reinvention. With institutional and civic support, the future of glassmaking in Sunderland can thrive.

SIGNED,

Peter Layton
Katharine Coleman MBE
Richard Slee
Cathryn Shilling

Founder of London Glassblowing, glass artist
Glass artist, member of CGS
Artist, Professor Emeritus,
Trustee of the Contemporary Glass Society and Glass Artist and Designer

Sarah Brown	Chair of The Contemporary Glass Society and Glass Artist
Brandi Clark	Executive Director Glass Art Society
Almuth Tebbehoff	Vice President, Royal Society of Sculptors
Allister Malcolm	Glass Artist, trustee British Glass foundation and Liveryman of the worshipful company of glass sellers of London
Marc Barreda	Design academy Eindhoven, Make Eindhoven, studio Marc Barreda
Magdalene Odundo	Artist
John Moran	Artist
Elliot Walker	Artist, Blowfish Glass, Winner of Blown Away series 2
Bethany Wood	Founder of Blowfish Glass UK
Monica Guggisberg	Baldwin Guggisberg Ltd (Artist and Director)
Gena Johns	Gallery Director at London Glassblowing
Matthew Durran	Glass artist and curator
Neil Wilkin	Glass-maker
Colin Reid	Independent glass artist
James Devereux	Director: Devereux and Huskie Glassworks
Katherine Huskie	Director: Devereux and Huskie Glassworks
Tim Rawlinson Artistic	Director of London Glassblowing
Helga Watkins-Baker	Director - The Glass Hub
Colin Rennie	Senior Lecturer Glass and Ceramics University of Sunderland, Co-Director Torus Torus Studios
James Maskrey	Senior Glass Technician, Academic Tutor, Artist Facilitator, Artist.
Robert Winter	Senior Lecturer University of Sunderland
Antonios Koutouzis	Head of Casting: Berengo Studio, Venice
Amelia Skachill Burke	Director of E&M Glass
Charlie Burke	Director of E&M Glass
Angel Monzon	Vessel Gallery Director
Jack Tadd	Managing Director - Warm Glass UK
Sarah Blood	Associate Professor and Division Head, Sculpture Dimensional Studies, New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University, NY USA
Dr Jeffrey Sarmiento	Senior Lecturer, School of Art and Design, Australian National University
Dr Theodore Harper-Davis	Senior Lecturer in Ceramic Art, HDK Valand, University of Gothenburg
Alan J Poole	Glass Collector, Promoter & Life Time Member, Contemporary Glass Society.
Katharine Dowson	MRSS, Artist, Visiting Tutor and Fellowship recipient
Dr Guy Marshall Brown	Academic, University for the Creative Arts
Richard William Wheater	Founder/Director Neon Workshops LTD
Liam Reeves	Specialist technical instructor- Glass-RCA
Erin Dickson	Digital Specialist at Canberra Glassworks, Australia. UoS PhD Graduate.
Dallas Collins	MRSS, RWA, RCA
Caitlin Greenberg	Section Head /glass lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)
Angela Thwaites	Artist, PhD Graduate University of Sunderland
Andrew Brewerton	Professor Emeritus.
Bruce Marks	Studio Manager London Glassblowing
Anthony Scala	Glass Artist
Gayle Matthias	Course Leader Arts University Plymouth
Amy Raymond	Director of Hot Clay
Steve Klein	Artist
Neus Torres Tamarit	Phenotypica Art & Science
Vanessa Cutler	Professor, Glass artist
Patricia Volk RWA FRSS	Ceramic sculptor
Ayako Tani	Artist and scientific glassblower
Joanna Manousis	Glass Artist / PhD Researcher
Cheryl Gould MRSS	President of Harrow Art Society, Part time Tutor, member of Just Glass

Aaron McPeake	Contemporary Glass Society, The Glass Society
Helen Slater Stokes	Lecturer, Research Fellow, FHEA, MRSS
Emma Woffenden	Administrator and Fundraiser, The Contemporary Glass Society
	Artist working in glass whose work has been supported through residencies, making and exhibitions by the NGC since 1998
Claudia Moseley	Shuster Moseley - Artists
Edward Shuster	Shuster Moseley - Artists
Chloe Monks	Glass School Manager, Education partner of Warm Glass
Juliet Mayo	Vessel Gallery Manager
Pam Reekie	CGS Administrator (retired)
Rita Griskonyte	Glass artist
James Rogers	Director, Borofest Ltd
Catherine Morgan	Glass caster
Jim Snee	Cermicist
Vicky Higginson	Independent glass artist
Peter Hammer	North East based Artist & Academic
Sacha Delabre	Glass blower For NGC
Dr Liz Waugh McManus	Glass artist
Fabian Wadsworth	Associate professor, and scientific collaborator with glass makers in Sunderland; expert in glass science
Zoe Garner	Glass artist / maker
Helen Eberhardie Dunn	Independent artist and director of Sky Soul Studio
Alexandra Carr MRSS	Artist. Co-Director of TorusTorus Studios Ltd.
Ronn Beattie	Ceramicist member of Royal Society of Sculptors
Eve Cromwell	Co-director of Sawdust CIC, Middlesbrough
Hannah Masi	Graduate, Artist in residence, hot glass team ngc
Alison Cooke	Member of Royal Society Sculptors
Veronika Neukirch	Member of the Royal Society of Sculptors, FHEA, artist
Tabatha Andrews	Artist and Lecturer, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation
Rebecca Newnham	Royal Society of Sculptors Fellow
Zac Weinberg	Independent Artist
Claudia Surrage	Director of Claud Christian
Sean Barnes	Glass Artist - Rōnin Glassworks
Dr Joanne Mitchell	Glass artist; Senior Technician (Waterjet), National Glass Centre & University of Sunderland
Ed Llewellyn	Professor Volcanology, Durham University
Kartini Thomas	Ceramic artist MRSS
Pamela Fyvie	CGS, OCG, WOA, Just-Glass
Ellie Moss	Director at Online Arts Retailer warm glass
Penelope Payne	Artist/curator
Victoria Ferrand Scott	Sculptor
Kalki Mansel	Glass blower For NGC
Cate Watkinson	Glass artist and former Senior Lecturer in Architectural Glass University of Sunderland
Srabani Ghosh	Member of the Royal Society of Sculptors
Tim Betterton	Technical support manager University of Sunderland
Andrew Pentland	Andrew Pentland Ceramics
Camilla Bridgewater	Glass Technician at Morley College
Eleanor Crook	Member of the Royal Society of Sculptors
Craig Mitchell	Self employed ceramicist
Ian Spence	Glass blower for NGC
Mary Watson	Ceramic artist/ educator/ AHRC ceramics researcher
Carla Murdoch	Alumni, Director: Carla Murdoch Ceramics

Robyn Townsend	Barclays innovation manager, Alumni
Daisy Parkinson	Assistant Glassblower At 'London Glassblowing' and 'Gather Glass'
Nicola Anthony MRSS	Sculptor working in mixed media including glass and resin
Emma Baker	Glass maker
Joanne Kenny	Glass artist and tutor
Sharon Haward	Lecturer in Fine Art, artist, curator
Eloise Forsyth	Intern at the Glass hub
Rachel Welford	Artist specialising in architectural glass. Glass lecturer.
Catherine Forsyth	Glass Artist and Academic Tutor
Christopher Summerfield	MRSS sculptor
Jiayun Ding	Glass artist
Liz Clifford	Member Royal Society of Sculptors
Linda Scott	Contemporary Glass Society
Anselm Croze	Kitengela Glass
Sue Delbridge	Glass artist
Panos Papanagiotou	Glassmaker
Dr. Anthony Amoako-Attah	Glass studio owner/ researcher/ freelance/ teacher
Jonathan Michie	Materials and Workshop Research Specialist - Soane Britain
Tom Jordan	Freelance artist, fabricator and technician
Anna Selway	Glass Workshop Tutor
Stephanie Vu	Scientific and artistic flameworker
Lynn Donnelly	Ceramicist & NGC studio tenant
Tim Cunliffe	Glass artist and educator
Rosie Leventon FRSS	Installation and Environmental Artist
Megan O'Hara	Glass School Instructor. Warm Glass
Helen Gordon	Graduate Glass Artist
Malvinka Bitelli	Ceramic restorer glass caster
Jenny Mc Namara	Artist
Valentin Rizzo	Fondation Martell
Marco Goncalves RCA	Alumni
Isabella Kullmann	Glass artist
Jane Vincent	Glass Artist
Verity Pulford	Artist and teacher
Jenny Pope	Artist
Richard Appleton	Independent Maker
Sarah Wiblerley	Glass Artist
Jo Pearl	Director - Artist
Hannah Rubidge	Glass Retailer- Buyer
Rena Holford	Alumni: glass maker
Jason McAnuff	Teacher of Design and Technology, MA in visual practice, one year glassblower NGC
Harriet Hellman	Ceramic Sculptor
Sarah Manly	Glass coldworker
Sharon Lappo	Glass artist
Jade Tapson	Alumni, employee and studio tenant
Sarah Pirozek	Artist
Adam Williamson	Teacher
Zoe Angle	Stained glass artist
Judy Boyt	Sculptor and ceramicist
Charlotte Steel	Artist
Ned Lidster	Freelance artist
Sarah Villeneau	Artist
Mike Barrett	Artist

Miranda Ellis	Freelance glass artist
Ryan Ashcroft	Glassblower/Assistant/cold worker
Caroline Bates	Artist
Muna Zuberi	Glass Artist
Benjamin Wells	Flameworker
Axelle Mary	Glassblower, Independent Artist
Mel Armsby	Ceramist
Mohyin Costalas	Independent Artist
Martin Edgar	Ceramist
Roberta Mason	Self employed glass artist
Michael Blow	Sculptor
Susan Kinley	Artist
Rosie Deegan	Artist
Deborah Duffin	Artist
Laura McCartney	Resident artist
Ben joiner	Artist
Mike Davidson	Glassmaker
Wade Darling	Scientific Glassblower
Pam Briggs	Professor and glass and ceramic artist
Alise Stopina	Alumni, glass and ceramics
Hilary Anderson	Design / Innovation Specialist
Annie James	Glass Artist BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Andrew Simmons	Marble Maker
Leo Hancock	Miniature glass artisan
Suzanne Smith	MA student, University of Sunderland
Caroline Welch	Self employed artist
Cassie Kaszefko	Alumini, Glass and Ceramics
Rachel McKenna	MA student; University of Sunderland
Sue Simmons	Glass Artist MA
Viv Szakacs	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Penny Riley-Smith	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Jeannette Telfer	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Kerry Roffe	MA student; University of Sunderland
Lina Buffington	MA student; University of Sunderland
Gemma Saleh	Ceramic artist
Simon Clifford	Lampworker
Brynn Hill	Glass Artist
Ella Scott	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Sophie Sweeney	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Yihan Wang	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Pagan Bortoloni	Student University of Sunderland
Stephanie Anderson	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Lynda Vusthoff	Freelance ceramicist
Emma Mitchison	Student
Katie Glazier	Alumini, Glass and Ceramics
Troy Brook	Student / Graphic Designer
Anna-Scarlett Vickerson	BA (Hons) Student, Glass and Ceramics, University of Sunderland
Meredith Brady	Alumni, British Esports Federation
Catherine Moule	Ceramics student
Dr Ashlyn Armour-Brown	Retired geologist
Ruth Hamnett	Customer