

Letter from **Dr. Alan Wedgwood** to **Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith**.

Dear Minister,

I believe that Sir Menzies Campbell has been in touch with you recently on the matter of the Wedgwood Museum. The museum's current predicament is a very distressing situation for all of its current employees and for its remarkable army of supporters from around the world. The Charity Commission seems to dismiss it as an 'intractable' problem but I hope that they are wrong and that, with sufficient political will, a solution may be found.

I write as the most senior of Josiah's descendants and the only one whose family is descended from him through an unbroken line of potters. And I write as the voice of the generations of Wedgwood managers under whose stewardship the Museum collection has been allowed to grow and flourish over two centuries to form the basis of the magnificent new Museum that we have today. This collection was formed in trust in the most literal sense and we rely on the Government not to break that trust.

Not long ago, the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt said, with reference to Charles Saatchi's recent donations :

“Philanthropy is central to our vision of a thriving cultural sector and this is an outstanding example of how Britain can benefit from individual acts of social responsibility”.

These words have a rather hollow ring when it appears that philanthropy and social responsibility are liable to be given such a slap in the face.

We now seem to be caught up in a web of legal niceties as to who did or failed to do what in their custodianship of the Museum. But surely the collection itself should be allowed to transcend the shortcomings of any individuals who may have put it at risk. And surely the time has come for the government to recognise this fact and take decisive action to preserve a most remarkable piece of heritage,

Yours sincerely,

Alan Wedgwood

PS I would like to add an extract from a letter of support which I received this week:

“I come from Stoke-on-Trent and worked for Wedgwood in their London offices many years ago. However, it is not just my connection with Wedgwood and the Potteries that horrifies me about the situation that has arisen with the Wedgwood Museum. The Potteries and Wedgwood in particular are part of Britain's illustrious industrial heritage. The government has allowed the pottery industry to fail.

This is tragic as generations of good potteries people have worked as skilled crafts people in the ceramic business. They are not just loyal to the factories they worked for and to the industry but proud to have been part of Britain's ceramic heritage and of Stoke-on-Trent's part in this.

(Amanda Pyatt, Cambridge)