

Copy of a letter sent to the Pensions Minister Steve Webb.

July 13th, 2010

Dear Steve Webb,

Wedgwood Museum appeal

I write in support of the appeal to save the Wedgwood Museum at Barlaston from the unintended consequences of the new pension laws introduced by the last government in 2005. As the enclosed appeal explains, an imminent court action could result in the museum being closed, and its priceless collections sold off.

The new building and display of exhibits have only recently been opened. The project was funded by a number of public bodies, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands and the Staffordshire Environmental Fund, in recognition of the contribution it would make to the regeneration of this depressed area of the Potteries.

Both the building and the display are exceptionally well designed, as was recognised by the award of the Art Fund Prize in 2009. Moreover, the collections provide a continuous record of the history of the Wedgwood firm through two and a half centuries, and its unique place in British manufacturing and cultural history – still associated at Barlaston with Wedgwood's ongoing production. In other words, much of its historical value lies in its integrity *as a collection*, and in its location – all of which would be lost if the pottery and other unique objects were sold off and dispersed.

As guest curator of the award-winning exhibition and book, *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts* [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 2009], I am particularly aware of the Wedgwood dynasty's place in British history through the family connections with Darwin. The historical importance of the firm's production could be compared with that of some of the classic works of British painting, which would never gain an export licence, or with that of the most venerable listed British buildings.

This is a classic case of unintended consequences, which would be a tragedy for the region and the nation. I beg you to use your best efforts to prevent the closure and sale.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Diana Donald