

Top Academics fail Test

A save the National Glass Centre campaign article

Article written by Allyn Walton solicitor and local heritage activist.

It's rather depressing to note the lack of basic maths and fact finding present at the very top of our academic institutions these days.

And what makes it worse is when you consider that the particular institution in question can't even accurately quote from their own expensively purchased Architectural report. It's here if you want to [read it](#).

Yes folks, it's official the University of Sunderland (UoS) gets no more than a D-minus when it comes to their custodianship of the National Glass Centre. And now that the 'evidence' has finally been revealed, we know that the so-called £45 million pounds figure for restoring this glorious Sunderland Monument to Glass, is more than 3 times the real cost! Yes, that's worth saying again isn't it? The real cost of restoring NGC to the pristine condition it was in when UoS were gifted it in 2010, according to the university's own report, is actually less than £14 million.

And what is the basis for this? Are we going to have one of those battles of the experts played out in front of the High Court? Well no actually we're not! Can you believe that the £45m sum they're quoting includes mechanical and electrical work already carried out in 2013. Even in its present configuration it is something UoS have shown they are completely incapable of maintaining to the most basic standards. What about this quote from UoS Head of Estates **as far back as 2013**:

“the centre has suffered as a business and its maintenance regime hasn't been as robust as it could have been.”

In February 2024 the University Finally Admitted they DO NOT have an Operation and Maintenance Document! this maintenance guide would have guaranteed the professional upkeep of The National Glass Centre

So what, you might say! £14m is still a lot of money isn't it? You can virtually hear the sound of the bulldozers behind those words can't you! Who is going to come up with £14m? Well it isn't going to be Sunderland City Council, not according to the reported words of Councillor Paul Stewart:

Though not necessarily agreeing to this himself, the Council's position is to keep the Glass Centre at a distance from the Council as they see it as the responsibility of the University

It looks as though we are on our own. So, let's use just a little bit of that expensively purchased university education to look at these figures a bit more closely shall we. Guess what it does include?

It includes an array of Solar PV across 550m² of newly refurbished roofing. That's sufficient to radically reduce the running costs of NGC for the next 40 years! In what world are we expected to live where an organisation pretends to want to expand its incompetence to an additional floor of a building they've admitted they can't properly maintain, at the expense of that? Just imagine those electric furnaces being fired up every day with carbon free electricity!

And according to the experts that have been brought in to look at this situation, the contingencies built into the significantly lower £14m figure are much too generous than they need to be for work of this nature in this sector!

That brings the cost of refurbishment down again to below £10m when this job is properly put out to tender with a serious intention to get the price right. Okay I can still hear you saying it... Who's going to come up with that amount of money? Who's got £10m tucked away for this rainy day?

Now we get to the most important cost of all. Guess what? The monetary cost of moving in those bulldozers and demolishing this fantastically important building is actually MORE than the cost of restoring it!

That's definitely something worth saying again ... **the cost of demolishing the National Glass Centre is MORE than the cost of saving it.**

And we're not just talking here about money. We're talking about the cost to the people of Sunderland for whom 1350 years of glass manufacturing finally comes to an end.

We're talking about the environmental cost of demolition, releasing thousands of tonnes of carbon back into the environment, not even mentioning the big unseemly hole that's left, where once stood the mighty JL Thompson shipyard. And yes, we are also talking about the mammoth mistake and reputational cost to the university itself for failing so drastically in this test.

University of Sunderland are not listening to us, at least not yet! So, why don't you help say it for us? Tell your friends the shocking truth, get your family to sign the petition, have your work colleagues write to their MP. Or, if you're not able to do any of that don't worry, why don't you just join the 35,000 of us who are already part of stopping this nonsense!

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#Save Our National Glass Centre -- Please Sign Petition & Spread the Word

#SaveTheNationalGlassCentre