The British Ceramics Declaration – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

The modern tableware industry was founded in North Staffordshire, which is also home to everything from bricks to advanced ceramics. For more than two centuries the mark "Made in England" has carried a meaning recognised across the world, and the skills that gave it that meaning remain in the towns and families of this area today.

The UK ceramics industry now competes against energy costs it did not set and cheap, often subsidised, imports. Those are matters largely beyond the reach of any local authority. But one thing is not.

Councils across the United Kingdom buy ceramics continuously and in volume. Tableware for our premises, sanitaryware and tiling for our buildings, bricks and clay roof tiles and pipes for what we build. A significant share of that public money is spent on goods manufactured overseas while British ceramic manufacturers struggle to survive.

For thirty eight years, the law prevented councils from acting on this. Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 treated the location of a supplier as a consideration a local authority was forbidden to take into account. On 4 February 2026 that restriction was lifted for contracts below the procurement thresholds. Local authorities are now at liberty to reserve competition to suppliers based in the United Kingdom. That liberty has, to date, gone almost entirely unused.

This Council does not accept that public money raised from British taxpayers should be spent abroad on goods that British firms stand ready to manufacture, still less that it should continue to be so spent now that the law permits otherwise. Nor does this Council regard a statement of sentiment as a substitute for a change in practice. What follows is intended to be binding upon this authority's conduct, and is given effect through its Below-Threshold Contract Reservation Policy.

We therefore declare, and commit as follows:

1. Ceramic tableware and giftware purchased by this authority shall be manufactured in the United Kingdom, wherever the law permits and value for money is demonstrated.

2. This commitment shall extend beyond tableware to the sanitaryware, wall and floor tiles, bricks, clay roof tiles, clay pipes and drainage products purchased for our premises and specified within our construction and refurbishment programmes.

3. This commitment shall be written into the rules governing how this authority procures, and shall not rest upon declaration alone.

4. That "British" shall mean manufactured within the United Kingdom; that goods imported and rebadged shall not qualify; that a British registered office attached to overseas production shall not qualify; and that where a backstamp or equivalent mark of origin exists, it shall be required.
5. That this authority shall require the same standard of the principal contractors who specify ceramic products upon its behalf, and shall make that expectation plain at the point of tender.

Signed on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Signed:

Councillor Jonathan Gullis

Leader of the Council

Date:

Co-signed on behalf of Ceramics UK

Signed:

Name: Rob Flello

Position: Chief Executive Officer, Ceramics UK

Date: