

The past two years have brought many challenges to businesses across the country and to the livelihoods of our wonderful community of freelance creatives. It is with great sadness, but equal amounts of pride in what has been achieved, that I must tell you that Sheffield Creative Guild can no longer sustain its business model and **the decision has been made, by the Board in consultation with Sheffield Culture Consortium, to close the Guild with your agreement.** It has been a very difficult decision to make but, after 18th August 2022, it will be a financial and legal requirement for us to stop trading. We sincerely hope you will **support and endorse this decision by voting in favour of the closing of the Guild (this is referred to as a “special resolution”)** in the Google Form here: <https://forms.gle/BixFUorgA9CRtoSB8>.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU:

The Guild was set up as a membership co-operative and as such **we need to secure the agreement of 75% of our members to a special resolution** to ensure the winding down of the Guild happens in a meaningful and measured way. For the Guild to close with dignity within a very tight timeframe it is **essential that you, as one of our members, take action by completing the Google form here:** <https://forms.gle/BixFUorgA9CRtoSB8>.

In this way we can collect everyone's votes as efficiently and easily as possible. We need to give our members **14 days' notice, which ends on 14th August 23:59**, but please feel welcome to respond before then. We have put together a short resource that we hope will answer some of your questions regarding this process – please visit the dedicated website page here: <https://sheffieldcreativeguild.com/faqs/>.

We hope that you would wish, as we do, that we can close the Guild in an orderly way and celebrate its legacy and avoid becoming insolvent at all costs. In collaboration with the Culture Consortium, **we are exploring the possibility of retaining our database of creative profiles as a free resource for people to connect with Sheffield's freelance makers and small creative businesses.** This won't be possible without your vote in support of the special resolution.

Please complete the following short Google form and indicate your agreement to the winding down of the Guild. You can also indicate if you agree in principle to your Guild website profile being transferred to a new, free database hosted by the Culture Consortium and there is an opportunity to share your favourite Guild moments, memories or simply what you have valued most.

BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT SITUATION:

The Guild was established in 2015 by Sheffield Culture Consortium and What Next? as a membership organisation. Its ambition was quite simple: to create a database of the city's many freelance makers and small creative businesses, and to celebrate this vibrant artistic community with occasional opportunities for creatives to meet and connect.

The Guild's financial model was designed so that membership fees underpin the bulk of our operating costs, supplemented by trading activity and grant aid. Over the last two years we have noted a reduction in full paid memberships; this was understandable during the pandemic when the income of many freelance creatives was curtailed and is equally

understandable with the current cost of living crisis. Public and private funding sources are under increasing pressure and frustratingly, the Guild was unsuccessful in its recent application to Arts Council England for £28,000. This situation leaves the organisation in a vulnerable financial position with only sufficient funds to operate for one or two months. After a period of business planning the Board has reached the conclusion that, beyond the current crisis, the Guild's business model is no longer sustainable. In the face of these financial pressures, the Board and the staff team have explored the Guild's purpose and how we might reinvent ourselves to be more sustainable. In doing so we believe that the Guild has achieved many of its original objectives and we see this as an opportunity to mark what has been achieved over the last seven years and celebrate the successes of its creative community as we draw the Guild to a close.

The Board will ensure that our excellent staff team, who have carved out an enabling, caring and encouraging space for Sheffield's creatives to share their rich and varied work, are fully supported in what is a difficult time for them. Due to our financial vulnerability, we have had no choice but to serve all staff with notice of risk of redundancy.

Thank you for being a part of the Guild, and for helping it to achieve all that it has. **To close the Guild in a measured way and enable us to support the staff fully**, we do need the agreement of 75% of our membership; we really appreciate your taking the time to fill in the short Google form which will make this possible, as a final show of support.

With kind regards

Tracey Shibli

(Chair of Sheffield Creative Guild's Board of Directors)