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WEDGWOOD BOSS: I'M COMMITTED TO ENGLAND

TONY O'REILLY:
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manufacturing
resource is in
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O'Reilly pledge on future of Barlaston after job cuts

BY DAVID ELKS
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

WEDGWOOD chief executive Tony O'Reilly today restated his commitment to manufacturing in North Staffordshire after the latest shake-up of the pottery giant.

The son of Waterford Wedgwood chairman Sir Anthony O'Reilly said the £61 million restructuring — involving the loss of 1,800 jobs across the UK, Ireland and Germany — was the final step towards profitability.

His comments come after the loss-making group announced a series of measures designed to return the business, which employs 2,500 people in North Staffordshire, to "sustainable profitability".

Mr O'Reilly said: "The instruction we have from Waterford is to maximise the available resources we have.

"Our first manufacturing resource is in Stoke-on-Trent. Our second is in Indonesia. If it's a choice between the two then I vote for England.

"We have put a lot of money into the factory at Barlaston, and yes, there has been some pain over the years,

but there are 2,500 people who we are committed to keeping jobs for."

He spoke out after the group announced major restructuring of the company's operations in Ireland and the UK.

The moves by the new owner of Royal Doulton include the closure of its Waterford Crystal plant at Dungan, resulting in the loss of 400 jobs. It will also increase the level of savings stemming from its acquisition of Royal Doulton. This will include the loss of 150 jobs in North Staffordshire over the next two years and a further 100 retail and 200 distribution jobs.

Mr O'Reilly said: "The objective is that this is the final stage of restructuring, though you can never say never.

"We previously right-sized the manufacturing side with investment that has made our factories the most advanced in the world. This restructuring is about all looking at the overheads and costs of doing things such as how we move product from A to B in the most cost-

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