

The Science Museum Group:

Science Museum, London
National Science and Media Museum Bradford
Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester
National Railway Museum York
Locomotion, Shildon

group.sciencemuseum.org.uk

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP



23 November 2021

Dear 

There is no bigger challenge facing humanity than climate change, and we all have a role to play in preventing further catastrophic impacts of dangerous climate change. As Chair of the Science Museum Group, I'm passionate about our museum's role in public engagement that brings the science of climate change to life and explores how science and innovation, which has created the problem, can also provide vital solutions, in this case a rapid shift away from the burning of fossil fuels to power our world.

So I was disappointed to see that you have signed a letter saying you will refuse to engage with our Group and so will not be part of the museum's discussion regarding the grave issues around the science of climate change. Differing opinions and debate are integral to our work, both as part of the cultural community and as a science institution. We have explained the thinking behind our decision to accept sponsorship from some energy companies and we respect your disagreement with it; however, we believe it is possible to have a robust disagreement while continuing to work together. Nowhere is this more important than in a goal we share: raising public awareness of climate change and appetite for the big changes that need to happen in all our lives.

The Science Museum Group receives sponsorship from a wide range of organisations and achieves public good with the money we receive. In all cases we retain editorial control. This principal is fundamental to how we work and is stated unambiguously in all sponsorship contracts.

I would like to take this opportunity to address some false claims made recently, including the unfounded allegation that a standard, reciprocal commercial clause, which appears in most sponsorship contracts the museum has signed, has 'gagged' our curatorial teams. This is not true. Our sponsorship agreements in no way impinge on the research, collecting, curation or interpretation carried out by our curators for exhibitions and galleries, nor on the content of our events. Such generic clauses appear in many contracts signed by many institutions. Other incorrect claims have been made about Adani Green Energy, the sponsor of a new gallery that we recently announced. Adani Green Energy is a major renewable energy company based in India and is part of the Adani Group, which includes five other businesses with interests spanning ports, airports and coal mining. Each of the businesses is an independent, publicly traded entity with its own board of directors. Adani Green Energy has plans to invest \$20 billion in clean energy generation, component manufacturing, transmission and distribution over the next 10 years. Investment at great scale is needed to move a country of 1.38bn people from high-carbon to low-carbon energy whilst still meeting their growing energy needs. And that sustainable energy needs to reach the vast network of rural communities, as well as the cities.

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The new gallery we are planning at the Science Museum will explore how nothing short of a global energy revolution is required to replace fossil fuels with renewables. As COP26 has made abundantly clear, governments need to do much more to drive forward regulatory frameworks that help green tech to prosper and be affordable to all and make fossil fuels less attractive. But the big energy companies, whose fossil fuel products power so much of the global economy today with all its impacts on climate, also have a responsibility to show more leadership in speeding up that transition to low-carbon energy sources such as green hydrogen, solar, wind, smarter and more sustainable storage and distribution of electrical power, along with greater energy efficiency.

Given the enormous expertise and wealth tied up in major energy companies, they need to play a much bigger role in urgent change to prevent a climate catastrophe. This potential explains the position taken by the Science Museum Group over the past decade that it would be counter-productive to rule out engaging with the entire sector; sponsorship decisions are made on individual companies, guided by the Transition Pathway Initiative, but with so much at stake there will continue to be robust internal discussion about where to draw the line. We respect people who disagree with our approach, providing they stick to the facts. And we are hugely proud of the dedication of colleagues across our Group whose passion and expertise ignites the curiosity of millions of visitors each year, on climate science and other important subjects. I do hope you find an opportunity to visit two current exhibitions at the Science Museum, Our Future Planet and Amazônia, or watch some of the Group's Climate Talk series, which feature more than 50 global leaders, experts, activists and campaigners, including those from the small island states who stand to lose the most, discussing how to tackle the problems facing communities around the world arising from climate change. These come in the wake of several climate-related SMG initiatives over many years, from our Atmosphere gallery to exhibitions, events – such as the climate-themed Manchester Science Festival this year – and artworks.

We must work hard to ensure we distinguish clearly between defending ourselves against untrue attacks and being open to reasonable criticism by those with a different perspective. Our Group is also doing innovative work to cut carbon emissions, in line with our target to achieve net zero by 2033 which you can read about on our website. Unlike some other institutions, our targets are science-based, following the respected Science Based Target initiative (SBTi) in line with the Paris agreement, and include Scope Three emissions which includes decarbonising our supply chain.

On all fronts we have more work to do, more discussions to have, more engagement to seek. We will do so with open minds and an honesty of purpose and ask the same of those who disagree with us.

I would be very pleased to meet you to discuss these matters more fully.

With kind regards.



Dame Mary Archer DBE
Chair, Science Museum Group

