

Dame Mary Archer
Chair, Science Museum Group
Science Museum
Exhibition Road
London
SW7 2DD

15th December 2021

Dear Dame Mary Archer,

We are writing to you following your response to our recent open letter. While you took the unusual step of contacting only some signatories, we wrote to you collectively and are therefore replying in the same manner.

Your comments are appreciated and we're glad we share common ground that *'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.'* For decades, scientists internationally have [warned](#) about the looming climate and ecological crisis that is [now upon us](#), and have repeatedly called for deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and a phasing out of fossil fuels. The International Energy Agency [recently stated](#) that there can be no new coal, oil and gas developments if the world is to limit global warming to 1.5°C and prevent catastrophic climate impacts. Our concerns lie in whether the Science Museum Group is fulfilling its own role and doing enough in this context.

At the outset, we want to make clear that it is not the case that we *'refuse to engage'* with the Group on this issue. We are more than happy to engage in discussion, but we will not associate ourselves professionally with the SMG, contribute to its exhibitions or appear at its events until you announce a moratorium on partnerships with fossil fuel-producing companies.

Your letter also suggests a further series of misapprehensions about our understanding and concerns, and we would like to take the opportunity to clarify these.

Relationship between Adani Green Energy and Adani Group

You say that you have been subject to *'incorrect claims'* around Adani Green Energy, and argue that it is an independent entity to its parent company. The reality however is that it is an integrated part of the wider Adani Group, which is involved in major coal mining activities in India, Indonesia and Australia. The entire Adani brand will benefit and gain legitimacy through its association with the SMG. You signed the sponsorship agreement with the Chairman of the Adani Group, who is also chair of Adani Green Energy, just one demonstration of the absence of any meaningful separation between the two. It is disappointing and, frankly, patronising to suggest that those raising concerns about the SMG partnering with a company with links to the coal industry have somehow misunderstood the situation. It is essential that the public is not misled regarding the full scope of activities of the Adani Group.

Partnering with companies engaged in fossil fuel extraction

We believe that by focusing on so-called 'incorrect claims' you are deflecting attention away from the core issue, which is summed up by Michael Mann, one of the world's leading climate scientists and expert on the [campaigns of denial, disinformation and deflection](#)

waged to this day by fossil fuel interests: *“The forces of inaction - that is, fossil fuel interests and those doing their bidding - have a single goal - inaction.”*

Partnering with companies such as Adani, Shell, BP and Equinor while they all have plans to keep exploring for and extracting new sources of fossil fuels lends their ‘inactivism’ a dangerous legitimacy at this crisis point in history. By stating *“it would be counter-productive to rule out engaging with the entire [fossil fuel] sector”*, you are conflating ‘engagement’ with the endorsement that comes from ‘financial sponsorship’ and ‘public branding’. We agree that a meaningful dialogue between scientists, governments and the fossil fuel industry is essential if we are to achieve a rapid transition to a low-carbon economy and achieve the Paris 1.5°C target. But dialogue is very different from the kinds of public partnerships you are defending. The fossil fuel-producing companies you are endorsing have track records of denial, delay and obfuscation, as well as clear weaknesses and loopholes within their [current decarbonisation plans](#) which many agree are insufficient.

As Dr Hannah Fry explained when she resigned from the SMG Board, *‘by allowing such public ties with these companies, I worry that the Science Museum gives the false impression that scientists believe the current efforts of fossil fuel companies are sufficient to avoid disaster.’* We share this worry because it so clearly conflicts with the SMG’s role in promoting the public’s understanding of science. Indeed, a flagship for science should not be brushing off the concerns of scientists about the reputational damage being done to science as a whole, as well as the detrimental impact that defending the fossil fuel industry will have on the young people who make up such a key part of your audience. There is a clear trend away from accepting money from fossil fuel organisations across numerous sectors, and the Science Museum must embrace these considerations and respond appropriately.

Non-disparagement clauses

You argue in your letter that concerns about the non-disparagement clause are ‘unfounded’ and a ‘false claim’. However, we believe the clause to be compromising, unnecessary and unwise in this particular context. Non-disparagement clauses with companies involved in highly controversial activities - and that are sponsoring programmes and exhibitions in which they have a vested interest - should not be standard practice in legally binding contracts with scientific and public bodies. Indeed, many other museums and scientific institutions do not include similar clauses in their contracts with funders.

Furthermore, to deflect the focus onto curators - and accuse critics of making false claims about their independence having been compromised - misrepresents the concerns that have been raised. The integrity of the SMG’s excellent curators has not been called into question. We are certainly concerned about the potential for curatorial self-censorship but this is just one worrying consequence. We are much more concerned by the recent examples of yourself and Sir Ian Blatchford’s lack of impartiality when publicly defending these fossil fuel companies from reasonable criticism - sometimes appearing to use the companies’ own talking points to do so. The clause therefore appears to be obliging the museum’s leadership to defend Shell and Adani from criticism when these are companies that are involved in highly damaging activities such as coal mining on Indigenous lands in India, Australia and Indonesia and seismic testing off the fragile coast of South Africa.

A balanced exhibition on climate change and the energy transition should acknowledge and include (i) the fossil fuel industry’s historic role in causing the climate crisis as well as its continued impact on the climate, (ii) its current unacceptable exploration for new sources of fossil fuels and (iii) its ongoing commitment to ‘inactivism’. It is your responsibility as a science museum to accurately communicate this wider context but if these same companies are sponsoring the exhibition and a non-disparagement clause is in place, our concern is

that this could not happen. If retaining independence is not an issue for you or your staff then there can surely be no harm in dropping the clause from existing and future contracts?

Engaging with your critics

We are glad to hear you intend to move forward in this debate with 'open minds and an honesty of purpose'. This will require you to be open to reasonable criticism rather than responding with defensiveness to the substance of concerns that your own advisors and those of the wider scientific community have raised.

We hope you are now willing to engage with your critics in a genuine and meaningful way; not just scientists but the Indigenous communities and young people who have raised deeply-held concerns and been brushed off. This means no longer characterising legitimate criticisms as '*unfair attacks*' and trying instead to understand why the partnerships with Adani Green Energy, three oil and gas companies, and the non-disparagement clauses, are all causing such genuine concern among multiple stakeholder groups and doing serious damage to the SMG's reputation. The forces of inactivism are powerful and pernicious and it is not an unreasonable demand that the SMG acknowledges these and commits to the moratorium we have requested: publicly committing not to renew any existing contracts when they expire, or to form any new ones until the sponsor demonstrates credible action to phase out fossil fuels in line with the Paris 1.5°C target.

We were pleased to hear that you are willing to meet and discuss these matters. We would be happy to convene a small group to discuss the points above, on the record. Please contact Dr Alison Green, Scientists Warning Foundation (alison.green@scientistswarning.org) who will liaise on our behalf to arrange a date.

Yours sincerely,

The signatories of the [Open Letter to the Science Museum](#):

Dr Deonie Allen, researcher, University of Strathclyde Glasgow
Dr Steve Allen, Dalhousie University Canada, University of Birmingham UK
Kirsti Ashworth, Researcher in Atmospheric Sciences, Lancaster University
Margrete Auken, Member of the European Parliament
Wolmet Barendregt, Eindhoven University of Technology
Dr Tom Barker, Graduate School of the Environment, Centre for Alternative Technology
Heather Barnett, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London
Simon Batterbury, A/Prof, University of Melbourne and Visiting Prof, Lancaster University
Mike Berners-Lee, Professor of Sustainability, Lancaster University
Dr. Kenneth John Bignell, Imperial College
Dr Alex Bush, Lancaster University
Professor Paul Chatterton, University of Leeds
Dr David L Clements, Reader in Astrophysics, Imperial College London
David Cross, Reader in Art and Design, University of the Arts London
Prof Mathias Disney, Professor of Remote Sensing, University College London Dept of Geography
Graeme Eddolls, University of Glasgow
Paul Ekins, Professor of Resources and Environmental Policy, University College London
Eleonora Evi, MEP
Professor Neil Forsyth
Dr Alison Green, Executive Director, Scientists Warning Foundation (www.scientistswarning.org)
Professor Chris Griffiths, Professor of Primary Care, Co-Director, Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research, Queen Mary University of London

Dr Emily Grossman, science author, broadcaster and public speaker
Dr Sedat Gundogdu, Chief Scientist, Microplastic Research Group, Cukurova University
Joanna Haigh, Emeritus Professor of Atmospheric Physics, Imperial College London
Dr Jordan Harold, Lecturer, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and University of East Anglia, School of Psychology
Christopher Haydon, Theatre Director
David Humphreys, Professor of Environmental Policy, Open University
Prof Kate Jeffery, Professor of Behavioural Neuroscience, UCL
David A. Kirby, Professor of Science, Technology and Society, Cal Poly University
Prof Georgy Koentges, University of Warwick, Professor of Biomedicine and Evolution
Sam Langford, Science Communicator & Engagement Consultant
Esther Lie, Engagement professional, King's College London
Jack Lowe, Artistic Director/CEO curious directive theatre company
Rebecca Manson Jones (Artistic Director) & John Holmes (Executive Director), Spare Tyre Theatre
Dara McAnulty, Naturalist, Author and Environmental Campaigner
Jim McCambridge, Professor, Dept of Health Sciences, University of York
Bill McGuire, Professor Emeritus in Geophysical & Climate Hazards, UCL
Professor Susan Michie, Professor of Health Psychology
George Monbiot, journalist, author, environmental activist
Jenny Nelson, Professor of Physics, Imperial College London
Chris Packham, naturalist and broadcaster
Dr Stuart Parkinson, Executive Director, Scientists for Global Responsibility
Professor Rona Patey, University of Aberdeen
Zephyr Penoyre, Researcher in Astrophysics, University of Cambridge
Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, Member of the European Parliament
Robert Pollin, Distinguished University Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Professor Megan J Povey, University of Leeds
Jane Rendell, Professor of Critical Spatial Practice, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
Professor Alfred William Rutherford FRS, Chair of Biochemistry of Solar Energy
Emma J. Sayer, Reader in Ecosystem Ecology, Lancaster University
Andrew Simms, Co-director, New Weather Institute
Jon Spooner, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Unlimited Theatre
Dr Leo Steeds, University of Warwick
Dr Katie Steckles, freelance maths communicator
Hedvig Elisabeth Svestrup, Climate campaigner, Greens/EFA in the European Parliament
Dr Khalil Thirlaway, Science Communicator
James Thornton, Founding CEO, ClientEarth
Professor Jeremy Till, Head of Central Saint Martins, Pro Vice-Chancellor University of the Arts London
Cristina Torrente, Science Communicator
Matthew Tosh, Presenter and Pyrotechnician
Jess Turtle, Co-founder, Museum of Homelessness
Gordon Walker, Professor, Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University
Dr Benjamin Waterhouse, Doctor
Robert Tony Watson, Professor Emeritus University of East Anglia, former chair IPCC, IPBES
Dr Rebecca Whittle, Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University
Professor Dilys Williams, Director of Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion
Tristram Wyatt, Senior Research Fellow, Zoology Dept, University of Oxford
Daniel York Loh, Writer/Actor/Filmmaker
Danielle Zelli, Education Programmes Facilitator