

BP's cultural sponsorship: A corrupting influence



Art Not Oil
Coalition



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artnotoil.org.uk



*Gilberto Torres, who is currently suing BP for its role in his kidnap and torture in Colombia, speaks about his experiences in the British Museum.
Photo: Kristian Buus*

Far from being a ‘no strings attached’ funder, BP’s behaviour is described by a member of British Museum staff, speaking exclusively for this report, as ‘extremely demanding of the Museum – bullying, I would say.’

Front cover photo: Performers from the Art Not Oil coalition call for an end to BP sponsorship of culture, in the British Museum. Photo by Anna Branthwaite

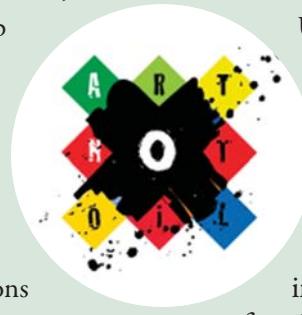


Oil from BP’s Deepwater Horizon disaster, part of a ‘rebel exhibition’ in the British Museum - see historyofbp.org. Photo: Amy Scaife

The Art Not Oil coalition

Art Not Oil is a coalition of groups united around the aim of ending oil sponsorship of the arts.

They include BP or not BP?, a theatrical protest group who campaigned successfully to end BP's sponsorship of the Edinburgh International Festival; Liberate Tate, whose audacious art interventions helped force Tate and BP to split; the PCS Union Culture Sector, representing 5,000 workers in UK museums and galleries;



Platform London; Rising Tide UK; UK Tar Sands Network; Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement; and the Progressive Science Institute. We are part of the international movement for #FossilFreeCulture.

For more info please visit our website: artnotoil.org.uk

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BP's cultural sponsorship: A corrupting influence

Summary

This year, BP's sponsorship deal with four of the UK's most prominent and visited cultural institutions will come to an end: the British Museum, the Royal Opera House, Tate and the National Portrait Gallery. It was revealed in March 2016 that BP's deal with Tate will not be renewed; the other three institutions are still in negotiation with BP over the future of these partnerships.

In the aftermath of 2010's Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico – which landed the company with the biggest criminal and environmental fines in US history – BP initiated a five-year sponsorship deal with these globally renowned cultural institutions. The deal has helped BP to clean up its tarnished reputation, and provides the company with a strategic tool for furthering its business aim of the continued and long-term extraction of fossil fuels.¹ By promoting its brand within iconic museums and galleries, BP aims to secure a 'social licence to operate', framing itself as a responsible corporate citizen in the eyes of the public and those in positions of power.²

According to BP CEO Bob Dudley, the company 'supports the best of British arts and culture with no strings attached'.³ The reality is more complex, and more troubling. By providing a trickle of funds to its 'cultural partners', BP is able to influence the content of events and exhibitions, and use respected, publicly-funded institutions to promote its own business interests to powerful elites. The company's position as a funder is compromising the independence and integrity of Britain's cultural sector, and stifling voices of criticism and dissent.

For the first time, this report provides wide-ranging evidence of this corrupting influence, most notably in the British Museum, Tate, National Portrait Gallery and Science Museum. It draws on material from a series of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests made in 2015-16.

The FOI Act only provides limited and often heavily redacted access to certain emails and documents, so the bulk of BP's relationships with its cultural partners – phone calls, personal conversations, and un-minuted meetings – remain hidden. However, even the limited material uncovered here contains concrete examples that provide an insight – however partial – into BP's influence over these institutions.

These examples include:

- Hosting meetings for cultural institutions' security staff to co-ordinate the management of anti-BP protests
- Funding a festival of Mexican culture in order to gain access to Mexico's ambassador in the run-up to oil lease auctions
- Using its sponsorship relationships to lobby the Culture Minister
- Getting final approval on curatorial decisions in the British Museum's Indigenous Australia exhibition

Far from being a 'no strings attached' funder, BP's behaviour is described by a member of British Museum staff, speaking exclusively for this report, as '*extremely demanding of the Museum – bullying, I would say.*'

The institutions have been reticent to share information about these relationships. Our requests for information have encountered inconsistent responses from the British Museum, resistance to disclosure by the Metropolitan Police Service and uncovered errors in FOI searching at the Science Museum and National Portrait Gallery.

These examples appear to breach the institutions' own ethical codes, and those of the umbrella bodies to which they belong. This crossing of ethical 'red lines' should be of grave concern to trustees, staff and the public. If publicly-funded cultural institutions are to prevent their core purpose from being undermined, and be ethically consistent at all levels of their operations, they should follow in the footsteps of Tate and the Edinburgh International Festival and end their sponsorship deals with BP.

Key findings

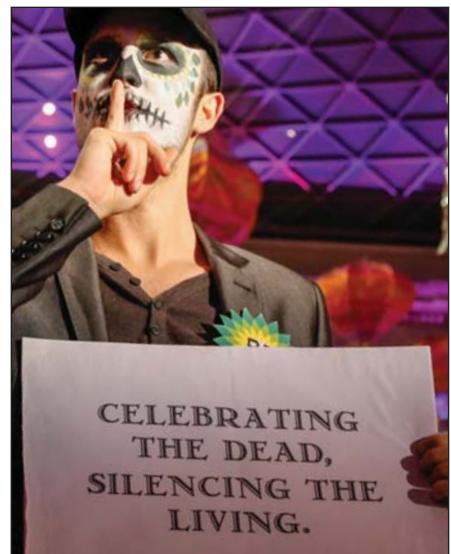
While the sponsored institutions claim that BP has no influence over how they are run, we have unearthed troubling evidence to the contrary. This report identifies inappropriate influence by BP in three key areas: curatorial decision-making, security procedures and opportunities for influence over policymakers.

BP-sponsored security

- BP held a meeting at its London Offices between its security team and representatives of its cultural partners in order to discuss ‘suggested measures’ for the management of legitimate protest
- BP has hosted ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’ at its London Offices for personnel from the cultural institutions it sponsors
- BP has regularly been in a position to influence institutional security procedures, pass on intelligence/surveillance material and ensure those with legitimate concerns about BP’s business practices are closely monitored



*BP head office in London
Photo (cc) WhisperToMe*



A ‘deathly’ BP exec’ attends the British Museum’s BP-sponsored ‘Days of the Dead’ festival, along with BP, British officials and the Mexican ambassador. Photo: Diana More

BP-sponsored curators and directors

- BP staff have been given opportunity to input into, sign-off and approve decisions related to programming and content at BP-sponsored institutions
- BP has been strategic and highly selective in its financial support, in order to instigate or further those institutions’ projects which are beneficial to the company’s wider business interests
- BP staff regularly enjoy interaction with senior members of gallery and museum staff, often maintaining close personal relationships with those in positions of power
- British Museum staff describe BP as ‘extremely demanding’ and ‘bullying’

BP-sponsored policymakers

- BP has established high-level relationships at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), enjoying regular private meetings and issuing personal invitations from BP’s CEO to the Secretary of State to private launch events
- BP sought to use its sponsorship relationships to enhance its own lobbying ahead of the 2015 General Election
- BP used its cultural partnerships to secure private meetings and VIP reception events with government officials from countries of strategic interest to the company, such as Mexico and Australia, and the British Museum even requested the Mexican Embassy delete the invitation list for one such VIP reception with BP



*The Science Museum’s Director Ian Blatchford receives the Pushkin medal from Vladimir Putin.
Photo: the Kremlin*

Introduction:

BP's controversial arts programme

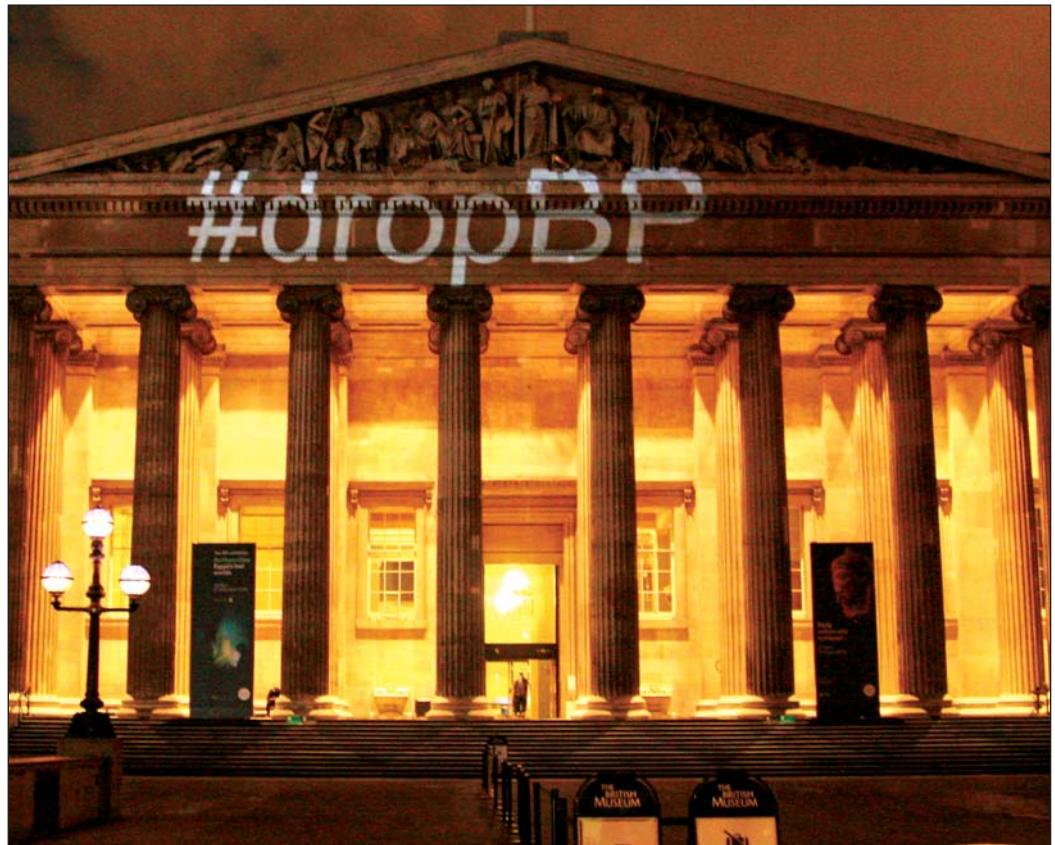
On Friday 11th March, it was confirmed that, after 26 years, BP will no longer sponsor Tate when the current funding deal ends in 2017. BP has claimed that this decision was down to a 'challenging business environment' and the need to cut operational costs.

However, it is clear that a sustained campaign of creative protest, legal action and public pressure had made Tate's relationship with the oil company untenable.⁴

One month later, on Wednesday 6th April, the Edinburgh International Festival

launched its 2016 programme without BP sponsorship, bringing to an end a 34-year funding relationship. BP again cited the 'challenging business environment' as the reason for the split, even though its annual donation was only £10,000 - a figure dwarfed by the £14 million pay rise it gave its CEO at the same time, making this a highly implausible excuse.

The writing could now be on the wall for BP arts sponsorship. An opinion poll by Morar Consulting, commissioned by arts group Platform in March 2016, found that one in two Londoners (50%) want the British Museum to drop BP sponsorship (28% supported the BP funding, and the remainder didn't know.) A separate survey conducted by the Public and Commercial Services Union, found that 62% of the British Museum's own staff think its BP sponsorship deal is 'unethical'.⁵



The hashtag #dropBP is projected onto the British Museum by Feral X as a lecture on the museum's forthcoming BP-sponsored exhibition, Sunken Cities, is held in the BP Lecture Theatre inside. Photo: Diana More.

Tate had been part of a block 5-year sponsorship deal with BP, announced in December 2011, alongside three of the UK's most prominent and visited cultural institutions: the British Museum, Royal Opera House and National Portrait Gallery. These three have not yet confirmed whether they will renew their sponsorship deals with BP beyond 2017, but are due to do so this year.

In the aftermath of 2010's Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, the five-year sponsorship deal with these four globally renowned cultural institutions – and other partnerships with organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company – helped BP to clean up its tarnished reputation and deeply embed the fossil fuel industry in Britain's cultural spaces.



Raging fire at BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, April 22, 2010 Photo (cc) US Coastguard

Meanwhile, it has become increasingly clear that averting the worst impacts of climate change will require a wholesale shift by society away from fossil fuels. This poses an existential crisis for oil companies, and BP has reacted by exploring for more dangerous and carbon-intensive sources of fossil fuels, lobbying against effective climate policy, and seeking ways to persuade the public that they still have a vital part to play in our long-term energy future. The Paris climate deal, struck in December 2015, contained a commitment by governments to phase out fossil fuels entirely. But BP is doing everything it can to ensure this does not happen, and its cultural sponsorship programme is a vital part of that strategy.

While the scale of BP's 'brand-washing' in our publicly funded museums and galleries is significant, the scale of its investment is not, comprising less than 1% of the annual income of the British Museum, Royal Opera House and Tate.⁶ The amount given to the British Museum annually is equivalent to the profit made by the company every two hours.

The FOI source material for this report can be accessed as a series of Appendices, here: <http://tiny.cc/BPinfluence>

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Opposition to BP's sponsorship of UK arts and culture, due to its human rights record and contribution to climate change, has been escalating for several years, with respected artists, actors and cultural figures increasingly speaking out,⁷ and campaigners and visitors making their opposition felt in creative and engaging ways.⁸

This report draws on Freedom of Information Act responses from the British Museum, Tate, National Portrait Gallery, Science Museum, the Metropolitan Police Service, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and was primarily researched and compiled by Dr Chris Garrard, with contributions from other members of the Art Not Oil coalition.

Each section of this report lays out the key findings from different areas of BP's influence, and raises ethical questions for the institutions to answer. The report also highlights examples of where BP's activities appear to breach the institutions' own ethical policies, and/or the Museum's Association (MA)'s recently relaunched Code of Ethics. Gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies in the information received from the institutions have also been noted.

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BP-sponsored security

Through requests made under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, we have been able to confirm that:

- BP held a meeting at its London Offices between its security team and representatives of its cultural partners in order to discuss ‘suggested measures’ for the management of legitimate protest.
- BP has hosted ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’ at its London Offices for personnel from the cultural institutions it sponsors.
- BP has regularly been in a position to influence institutional security procedures, pass on intelligence/surveillance material and ensure those with legitimate concerns about BP’s business practices are closely monitored.



Liberate Tate occupied Tate Modern's Turbine Hall for 25 hours for Time Piece. Photo by Liberate Tate

1a. Collusion Around the Management of Legitimate Protest

BP has been eager to protect the prestige and PR benefits of its cultural sponsorships by mitigating the impacts of any protest against its presence in museums and galleries. It has done this by colluding directly with senior staff and security personnel at cultural institutions, collectively discussing measures for the management of legitimate protest. This represents an unacceptable level of influence over institutions’ operational procedures and raises the possibility that limits have been placed on freedom of expression within cultural institutions at the behest of a corporate sponsor.

On 3rd February 2015, BP hosted a hastily arranged meeting at its offices for its security team and senior staff members from its cultural partners.

The invitation, sent on the 15th January with ‘high importance’, read:

‘Dear all – we have had an indication that there will be increased activist action around the BP arts & culture programme in 2015. The BP security team have requested a meeting to discuss the impending action, I’m hoping we can arrange this during the first two weeks of February. Can I please ask you to provide [name redacted] with your availability in February, the meeting should include a representative from your security team.’⁹



In summer 2014 BP or not BP? held a 'flash-horde' inside the British Museum, which included a 30-foot-long pop-up Viking longship. Security prevented several known members of the group from entering, and one activist was arrested, then released without charge. Photo: Hugh Warwick

We know that the meeting was attended by:

- The Corporate Relations Officer and Head of Security Operations from the British Museum¹⁰
- The Head of Safety, Security & Services, Security Operations Manager and Corporate Partnerships Officer from Tate¹¹
- A member of staff from both the Security and Development Departments of the National Portrait Gallery¹²
- Staff from the Science Museum Group, roles currently unspecified.¹³

We believe that equivalent members of staff at the Royal Opera House and Royal Shakespeare Company may have attended this meeting but as they are not subject to the FOI Act, this has not yet been confirmed. The original invitation email had seven recipients alongside four others copied in.

An FOI request invited the Metropolitan Police Service to confirm whether any members of their staff had also attended this meeting. After taking additional time to consider exemptions that could be applied to this request, they chose not to disclose any information in relation to this question. Their decision is being appealed.¹⁴

The agenda for the meeting, released with redactions by Tate, makes the nature of the meeting clear and reveals the topics of discussion:

Agenda Items	Owner
Context	[Redacted]
Shared knowledge	[Redacted], BP & All
Suggested measures	All
Communication	All
AOB	All ¹⁵

Below these bullet points are fifteen lines of redacted text.

While Tate did disclose this redacted version of the agenda, it was not easy to obtain; there were a number of worrying inconsistencies and contradictions in the FOI responses from the different institutions (see section 1e).

Ethical questions raised

Why are security personnel at publicly-funded cultural institutions discussing shared anti-protest measures with a corporate sponsor and oil company? In whose interests do security personnel act when responding to legitimate protest?

1b. BP-hosted ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’

The Security Briefing Meeting on the 3rd February 2015 is significant not just because it took place, but because it did not take place in isolation. Further emails (detailed in the next section) show on-going communications on security matters between BP and sponsored institutions, and meetings where security measures were regularly discussed. Furthermore, just nine days after the Security Briefing Meeting, personnel from Tate, the National Portrait Gallery, the Science Museum and likely other BP-sponsored institutions returned to BP’s offices in St James’s Square for a 3-hour Counter-Terrorism Training.

On the 10th December 2014, BP sent the following invitation marked ‘high importance’ to several of its cultural partners:

Dear all – in these times of heightened security, [Name redacted], BP’s Group Security Advisor is organising a security briefing led by [Name redacted] at our offices on the morning of 12 February 2015. We would like to invite you to attend this extremely important & valuable briefing session which will last for approximately 3 hours. We are offering you 2 places on this programme.

Can you please advise by 12 January whether you are able to attend and also advise the name of the colleague attending with you (I presume security personnel).

We will confirm exact timings nearer the time. Look forward to hearing from you.¹⁶

This session, which was coordinated by BP’s Group Security Advisor, was run by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office and the Metropolitan Police, and is known as ‘Project ARGUS’.

We know that:

- ‘Representatives of BP’s arts and culture partners’ were invited to attend.¹⁷
- Tate’s Security Operations Manager attended and BP pressed the gallery with a phone call for someone to attend.¹⁸

- Three members of staff from the National Portrait Gallery - from the security, press and development departments - attended and ‘found it useful’.¹⁹ The presence of press and development staff suggests that the training session had relevance beyond security management issues alone.
- The Head of Security from the Science Museum attended the session but had understood that it was to be a BP-run session and had been unaware that the National Counter Terrorism Security Office would be running it.²⁰
- When the Metropolitan Police Service was asked to provide ‘Details and copies of any correspondence that took place between the Metropolitan Police and BP plc. in relation to the organisation of an ARGUS counter terrorism training’, it simply confirmed the training had taken place and claimed that, ‘No documentation (hard copy or electronic) is held in relation to the organisation of this event.’²¹

In combination with the Security Meeting on the 3rd February, this represents a concerning sequence of events:

- BP appears to have invited the Metropolitan Police to host a Counter-Terrorism Training at its offices.
- BP invited staff from the cultural institutions it sponsors to attend this training.
- BP then hurriedly arranged a security briefing meeting nine days prior to this Counter-Terrorism Training to discuss and agree measures for the management of legitimate protesters critical of BP’s business record.

Inviting staff from BP-sponsored cultural institutions could potentially help to nurture (a) a commonality of approach in the response to any unsanctioned activity taking place in BP-sponsored institutions, and (b) a heightened level of concern and anxiety about unsanctioned activity taking place in BP-sponsored cultural institutions.

Holding these two events in close proximity to one another may have increased the likelihood that measures for the management of protest would be incorporated into or associated with broader counter-terrorism strategies at these cultural institutions.

We also know that Des Violaris, BP's Head of UK Arts & Culture, was included in a number of these emails.

This, and other material we have gathered, suggests that her role extends beyond purely cultural activity and into the management of those institutions that are promoting the BP brand. This heightens concerns about her role as a judge of the BP Portrait Award and the curatorial influence she has through this. (See section 2a.)

1c. Day-to-Day Security Collaboration

In addition to these specific examples of collusion around security training and planning, we have uncovered material that shows ongoing collaboration between BP and BP-sponsored institutions over security matters on a day-to-day basis. Following an FOI request to Tate, the following thread of emails from the 21st January 2015 was released:

'We [Tate] are having an event for BP tomorrow night at Tate Britain. The event is an employee event, approx. 300 guests coming to see the permanent collection, they do it every year and no protest threat was anticipated. Today we got a call from the client [BP] saying they had intel that there is some protest activity planned around this event. They aren't sure at this stage what the activity is. I believe [name redacted] is aware, I wondered if you had any intel? What do you advise?'

In response, the following is sent:

'Hi [name redacted] Yes We are aware, and talking to relevant people. Suitable resources will be in place. [Name redacted]'

This thread of emails was sent, seemingly to BP, with the following added:

*'Hi [name redacted] everybody all connected about tomorrow.'*²²

In the broader context of security trainings and meetings at BP's offices, the discussion of 'talking to relevant people' and having 'suitable resources in place' takes on a new significance. Channels of communication are open and opportunities to influence security protocols are available.

This is corroborated by material released by the British Museum. Following a request for correspondence between staff from the British Museum and BP, a record of 'Action Points' from a joint meeting on 8th April 2015, again taking place at BP's St James's Square offices, was released.

The document primarily dealt with plans relating to the BP-sponsored Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation exhibition. It notes:

*[Name redacted] confirmed that there could be protest activity around BP's sponsorship of [Indigenous Australia], specifically in relation to Australian land right debates. Campaigners have been asked by the British Museum to make any displays outside of Gallery 35, to protect exhibition objects from possible damage.'*²³



BP or not BP? protest at the launch of the British Museum's Indigenous Australia exhibition. Photo: Amy Scaife

The museum also confirmed to us that it had 'received information from BP relating to potential protests at the Museum in the period 2012 to 2015.' However, there is a concerning gap in the Museum's disclosures here – see section 1e, below.

The campaign group BP or not BP? were told by security personnel at the British Museum during a performance protest that BP had informed the museum's security team when they would be coming and that the group would be 'wearing black'. Based on the specific information the museum had and did not have, the group concluded that a member of BP staff or a contracted surveillance consultant had infiltrated one of their mailing lists and was gathering information on the group's activity.

This conclusion was reinforced by an email released under an FOI request to Tate, where a member of BP staff notifies the gallery about a planned creative protest following the London Climate March on 7th March 2015. The forwarded email's subject line restates the exact wording the group had used in its email communication to supporters: '7th March – After the March Action – A spill on the steps of Tate Britain!' That particular protest had a significant and disproportionate police presence throughout.²⁴

This is backed up by a document released by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, which shows BP's regular monitoring of the group's social media channels.²⁵

It is concerning that this process of monitoring by BP extends beyond just campaigners and to the activity of trade unions representing workers at institutions. In May 2015, members of the PCS Union, which represents workers at a number of galleries and museums, voted through a motion to formally oppose oil sponsorship. BP forwarded an article relating to the motion to its cultural partners on the 20th May and wrote:

'Would be good to understand if there is an affiliation to this organisation within each of your respective establishments.'

To this, a member of staff at the National Portrait Gallery replied, copying in the deputy director of the gallery:

*'Thanks for alerting me to this.
I believe the PCS Union does represent some gallery employees... I have shared this information with a wider group of colleagues so that we can be prepared and ready for any potential impacts.'*²⁶

1d. Security Collaboration at the Science Museum

This same pattern of interaction also extends to the Science Museum. On the 22nd June 2015, the Science Museum released correspondence between the museum and BP, which showed that security personnel had been invited to the BP-hosted ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’ but it did not make clear if the invitation had been accepted. A subsequent request was made to find out. However, the response made no reference to the ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’ session and instead detailed a number of further meetings where security matters were discussed at BP’s St James’s Square office:

- A meeting took place in relation to the final preparations for the launch of the BP-sponsored Cosmonauts exhibition in which security matters were discussed. In addition, its security team liaised with BP’s security team in preparation for the exhibition’s launch event.
- The meeting took place on Friday 11 September 2015 at BP’s London office. Some attendees were in person, others joined by telephone.
- At the meeting, a discussion took place regarding recent protest activity at other museums and the potential for protest activity at the Science Museum during the launch event.²⁷ However, the museum claims that it does not hold any correspondence in relation to the meeting.



Oil-covered pelican in the aftermath of Deepwater Horizon Photo (cc) Louisiana GOHSEP

The initial lack of any reference to the ‘Counter-Terrorism Training’ session in this FOI response, but inclusion of details about additional discussions, raises concerns both about the extent of collusion between BP and cultural institutions on security matters, but also the fullness with which the Science Museum and other institutions respond to FOI requests. Following an internal review, the Science Museum confirmed that ‘comprehensive calendar searches were not carried out’ initially.

In that response, the museum highlights that ‘all Science Museum Group security is outsourced to Wilson James’ but despite this, claim that ‘although we would always work with our corporate partners to discuss security, we would not use this intelligence as our source of decision making on security matters.’²⁸ The presence of its staff at BP’s security meetings suggests otherwise.



Tate security cordon off part of the unofficial 'Deadline Festival' display of Gideon Mendel's 'Drowning World' photographs.
(see: GideonMendel.com/submerged-portraits) Photo: Platform / Martin Lesanto-Smith

Ethical questions raised in sections 1b, 1c and 1d

The material revealed here – and the extent of the redactions and limitations of what has been released – show that the relationships between BP and these cultural institutions are not transparent, the principle of public trust has been undermined and ethical codes have been breached:

Article 1.3 of the Museums Association (MA) Code of Ethics states: Museums should 'support free speech and freedom of expression. Respect the right of all to express different views within the museum...'²⁹

Have limits been placed on freedom of expression within museums at the behest of BP?

Part 3 of the MA's Code of Ethics states: Museums and those who work in and with them should '...Build respectful and transparent relationships with partner organisations...to ensure public trust in the museum's activities.'

In whose interests are security staff being asked to act when managing protest? Could these revelations undermine public trust?

Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life, cited within the Ethical Policies of both the British Museum and Tate, states: 'Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.' And also: 'Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.'

By placing themselves under financial obligation to BP, are these institutions now making decisions that are not solely in the public interest?

Article 1.16 of ICOM's Code of Ethics states: 'The governing body should never require museum personnel to act in a way that could be considered to conflict with the provisions of this Code of Ethics, or any national law or specialist code of ethics.'

If a member of security staff does not feel comfortable containing and controlling protests against BP, could raising this undermine their relationship with their employer and even put their job at risk?

1e. Evidence Gaps in Security Disclosure

Information about the anti-protest security meeting described in section 1a was difficult to obtain. In Tate's response to our request for this material, the gallery did send a redacted agenda but also dubiously claimed that:

- It does not hold any minutes for the meeting, electronic or handwritten.
- No emails were sent by Tate staff in relation to this meeting.
- BP did not circulate any minutes for the meeting.



*Children Against Global Warming perform in the British Museum.
Photo Natasha Quarmby*

We made similar requests for material to the other institutions that had staff attend the meeting but they did not result in the release of the agenda.

The National Portrait Gallery did eventually locate the agenda on its system but only after we had requested an internal review. It blamed its initial failure to find it on an 'unintentional oversight', and that in interview, 'the Head of Security had no recollection of an agenda being issued'. The gallery also stated that the agenda had been 'issued to all attendees' at the meeting.³⁰ However, the Science Museum has claimed that, 'There are no papers or notes held by SMG [Science Museum Group] relating to this meeting' and the British Museum maintains that, 'There is no correspondence between BP and the British Museum in relation to this meeting.'³¹

If these institutions have withheld the agenda, and potentially other material, it would place them in breach of the FOI Act.

As noted in section 1c, a request for information relating to security protocols at the British Museum confirmed that the museum had:

'received information from BP relating to potential protests at the Museum in the period 2012 to 2015.'

However, when asked to specify how that communication had taken place and what events it was in relation to, the British Museum stated:

*'The Museum did not record when and how this information was communicated or the event or concern it was in relation to. This information is therefore not held by the Museum.'*³²

Given the significant quantity of electronic communications between BP and the British Museum revealed under previous FOI requests, the absence in this case is notable and there are grounds to suggest that a concerted attempt may have been made to avoid material being recorded that would then be subject to the FOI Act.

In a subsequent FOI request, we sought clarification from the British Museum as to how it knew that BP had communicated information to it in relation to the management of protests. In response, the British Museum simply states:

*'There are no records of any communications having taken place between the Museum and BP on potential actions.'*³³

This directly contradicts the British Museum's original response that it had 'received information from BP'. We can reasonably conclude that either material is being withheld or inaccurate information was given in response to the original request.

Even after an internal review of the request, the British Museum has not clarified its position: 'I have investigated the matter and can confirm that...the museum holds no recorded information relevant to this question.'³⁴

The Information Commissioner's Office states that there may be a breach of the FOI Act if a public authority deliberately hides or alters requested information to prevent it being released, or fails to respond adequately to a request for information.³⁵ This question has now been referred to the Information Commissioner.



Tate had been sponsored by BP for 26 years before announcing in March that they were parting company next year. Photo (cc) Kate Dahl

Ethical questions raised

Many of our FOI requests have been returned with substantial redactions, or have received insubstantial and conflicting responses, as above. If the material released already confirms that a breach of ethics has taken place, the disclosure of further material could show BP's corrupting influence running deeper still. The Freedom of Information Act may be being breached if an organisation:

- fails to respond adequately to a request for information;
- fails to adopt the model publication scheme, or does not publish the correct information; or
- deliberately destroys, hides or alters requested information to prevent it being released.³⁶

This last point is a criminal offence that individuals and public authorities can be charged with.

Where cultural institutions have sought to protect BP's interests by not providing the fullest possible response, they may be breaching the Act. Tate's reticence around the release of information around its contract with BP was successfully, if partially, overturned by Platform in 2015 following an Information Tribunal. This resulted in Tate being forced to reveal the size of BP's historic payments to the gallery.³⁷

Do the gaps and contradictions in the evidence we have uncovered mean that the FOI Act has not been properly followed by some of these institutions?

The MA Code of Ethics states that museums should 'build respectful and transparent relationships with partner organisations...to ensure public trust in the museum's activities.' Does the lack of transparency revealed by these FOI requests represent a breach of institutional integrity?

BP-sponsored curators and directors

Through a series of FOI requests made in 2015 and 2016, we have uncovered material showing that:

- BP staff have been given opportunity to **input into, sign-off and approve** decisions related to programming and content at BP-sponsored institutions.
- BP has been **strategic and highly selective in its financial support**, in order to instigate or further those institutions' projects which are beneficial to the company's wider business interests.
- BP staff regularly enjoy interaction with senior members of gallery and museum staff, often maintaining **close personal relationships** with those in positions of power.

'We support the best of British arts and culture with no strings attached.'

Bob Dudley, BP CEO,
speaking at BP's
2016 AGM

In addition to this, a member of British Museum staff describes BP as 'extremely demanding' and 'bullying', and confirms that some projects carried out by the museum are 'due to the whim of a funder', thereby compromising curatorial independence.

2a. Sign-off and Approval on Curatorial Decisions

Article 1.2 of the Museums Association (MA)'s Code of Ethics states that museums should, 'Resist attempts to influence interpretation or content by particular interest groups, including lenders, donors and funders.'³⁸ We have uncovered emails and other material that shows that BP-sponsored institutions, specifically the British Museum and National Portrait Gallery, have not adhered to this key ethical principle. The British Museum has stated that:

*'Corporate sponsors of the British Museum do not have any influence over the content of our exhibitions.'*³⁹

Emails released under the FOI Act demonstrate that this assertion is, at best, overstated and, at worst, false. This is corroborated by a British Museum employee who has observed BP's influence over the museum's activities.

They understandably need to remain anonymous. They told us:

'It is generally known that of all the corporate funders, BP is the most unpleasant to deal with. They are extremely demanding of the Museum – bullying, I would say.'

In the run-up to the British Museum's BP-sponsored Indigenous Australia – Enduring Civilisation exhibition in 2015, BP collaborated closely on planning. Tellingly, the museum's top marketing objective for the exhibition was:

*'To promote the ongoing partnership between the British Museum & BP'*⁴⁰

1. Marketing objectives

- To promote the ongoing partnership between the British Museum & BP
- To generate interest, stimulate word of mouth and drive maximum ticket sales
- To attract new audiences and re-engage audiences that have visited previous British Museum exhibitions such as *Ice Age art*, *Beyond El Dorado* and *Australian season*
- To encourage engagement with the events programme
- To support the promotion of membership and the related retail and catering activities e.g. restaurant menu, catalogue
- To encourage visitors to continue their relationship with the Museum via social media, enews and future online and venue visitation

A ‘Marketing objectives’ slide from a presentation by and for staff at the British Museum for the ‘Indigenous Australia - Enduring Civilisation’ exhibition. Note the top item on the list.

BP staff were given updates on ‘content, loans and development of the exhibition’ during meetings that also involved the Australian High Commission, and were invited to comment on the public programmes schedule for the exhibition.⁴¹

For the exhibition’s press launch, staff at the Museum prepared a briefing document that included ‘Questions for BP to answer’ and ‘Questions for Australian High Commission’, alongside answers to be given on behalf of the museum, presumably by the then director, Neil MacGregor. The anticipated questions for MacGregor included:

‘Why does the [British Museum] continue to use BP as a sponsor? Surely it is unethical for an oil company to sponsor the arts? How do you justify taking money from an organisation that has caused an environmental and social disaster of this magnitude?’⁴²

And, for BP: ‘Isn’t BP using arts sponsorship to soften up its image?’

The drafted answers simply itemise BP’s involvement in exhibitions and make no reference to ethics or to Deepwater Horizon. This single document brings together aligned messaging from BP, the British Museum and the Australian High Commission. It suggests that the text was prepared in close consultation, ensuring that the British Museum protected its sponsor by sidestepping difficult questions about BP’s ‘environmental and social disaster’, or actively deflecting attention from it through its director’s answers to the press.

Most concerning is that staff at BP were in communication with the museum about the possible commissioning and acquisition of a new painting from a group of Aboriginal women painters. A letter from BP, which appears to outline the terms of the acquisition of the new artwork, notes ‘the British Museum will have full control over the choice, specification, production and delivery of the Acquisition.’⁴³

A subsequent email from the British Museum to BP shows that this is not the case:

'We have heard back from the Spinifex women's painters and they have confirmed they are not able to take on another commission at this point however we have been offered the opportunity to purchase one of their current works.

The curator of the Australia exhibition is keen to move forward with this so we just wanted to make sure you had no objection to this?'⁴⁴

It appears from this communication that BP was given decision-making authority over what painting would be put on display in the Indigenous Australia exhibition at the museum. If BP had had an objection, what would the British Museum have done, having sought their approval?

In response to our FOI request, the British Museum also confirmed that the majority of Aboriginal communities consulted during the planning of the exhibition were not informed that BP would be the sponsor.⁴⁵ Even Des Violaris, BP's Head of UK Arts & Culture, had had the significance of this consultation emphasised to her by a member of the museum's staff – that it was 'the cornerstone of the whole project and would not have been thinkable had it not been a major part of the process.'⁴⁶

The impacts of extractive industries and climate change on Aboriginal communities are well-documented, and at the time, BP was in the process of pushing through controversial plans to drill in the Great Australian Bight, plans that have been opposed by Mirning Traditional Owner, Bunna Lawrie, among many others. Given all this, the decision not to consult – or even inform – the majority of Indigenous communities whose objects were featured in the exhibition that BP would be its sponsor, but to seek BP's approval for a particular acquisition, could be seen as insensitive, unethical and reflecting a cognitive dissonance on the part of the museum over its partnership with BP.

In another instance, BP was the sponsor of a Days of the Dead festival taking place at the British Museum on the 30th October to the 2nd November 2015, in association with the government of Mexico. Emails between BP, the Mexican Embassy/Government and the British Museum also appear to show that both were privy to detailed curatorial discussions, including responses to requests that may have come from BP.⁴⁷

At the National Portrait Gallery, where BP sponsors the BP Portrait Award, similar opportunities for influence over decisions relating to content occur regularly. Des Violaris sits on the judging panel for the award and thus BP has a direct influence over selecting the award's shortlist and winner. This represents the very real possibility of censorship of subject matter that BP is uncomfortable with.

As one fellow judge, Brian Sewell, previously revealed:

'BP's representative, Des Violaris, thought too much in terms of portraits that might make good advertisements... The National Portrait Gallery's director begged us to let Miss Violaris have her way, arguing that as the sponsor supplies the cash, the sponsor must be allowed the whip hand.'⁴⁸

Emails we have uncovered also show that BP is given approval on a range of materials at the gallery and that discussion of artists regularly takes place between the National Portrait Gallery and BP in relation to other aspects of the award.⁴⁹ In one exchange, where a print advert featuring a painting by a previous winner is discussed, the National Portrait Gallery writes:

*'...I don't believe this was the controversial artist but I will check for you.'*⁵⁰

The BP staff member replies:

*'Phew. Glad this isn't the controversial artist.'*⁵¹

One can only speculate what decision would have been made had BP inadvertently selected the so-called controversial artist for this advert.

At the Science Museum, BP's influence over curatorial decision-making in the past has been explicit. In 2004, the Science Museum opened its Energy gallery with sponsorship and direct involvement in content and curatorial decisions by staff from BP. A member of the museum's staff noted, 'We always ask our sponsors for help but we are not always able to mine them for information'. A promotional article on BP's website, which is no longer available online, made BP's influence clear:

*'A BP advisory board headed by Peter Mather, BP head of country, UK, gathered 10 experts from BP in areas from solar energy to hydrocarbons to help with content for the exhibits.'*⁵²

BP's then Senior Advisor in Future Fuels, Chris Dewey, noted that the young people using the gallery would be, 'the energy consumers who will use and choose which energy to use in the future', with the museum's then Sponsor Liaison Manager, Heather Allan, saying that, 'We would like to help BP meet their objectives on different levels, including corporate responsibility, education strategy and global strategy. This is not an unusual approach for us, but not every funder is BP.'⁵³



Investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova is serving 7.5 years in prison in Azerbaijan after criticising the Aliyev regime and BP's support for it. Photo: Olga A. Zakharov

The article also notes that BP commissioned the Museum to build an exhibition within the visitors' centre in Baku in Azerbaijan, where BP has significant business interests and works with the repressive Aliyev regime:

*'The cost of the \$3.2 million building and its \$1.6 million exhibition has been shared by BP and its partners in the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli, Shah Deniz, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and South Caucasus pipeline projects that come together in Sangachal.'*⁵⁴

Ethical Questions Raised

Curatorial control is generally regarded as sacrosanct in cultural institutions; this principle is enshrined in all ethical codes for the sector. When in 2015, BP or not BP? revealed that Shell, another major oil company with a UK cultural programme, had sought to influence the content of the Science Museum's exhibition on climate science, this caused significant reputational damage to the museum and prompted heated debate within the museums sector about the role of corporate sponsors. At the end of 2015, the museum chose not to renew its 5-year sponsorship deal with Shell.

By allowing BP to directly input into curatorial discussions and decisions, the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery are now at risk of similar reputational damage. The ICOM Code of Ethics, Article 1.1 states that:

'Regardless of funding source, museums should maintain control of the content and integrity of their programmes, exhibitions and activities.'

It is clear that BP has an inappropriate level of influence over the programmes, exhibitions and activities at the institutions it sponsors. The question is, how far does this influence go?

2b. BP's Strategically Selective Financial Support



A 'deathly BP exec' attends the British Museum's BP-sponsored Days of the Dead festival, along with BP, British officials and the Mexican ambassador. Photo by Diana More

BP consistently frames its sponsorship of the British Museum and other institutions as part of a larger philanthropic motivation. However, the selective nature of its support makes clear that it is simply part of a low-cost public relations strategy. This is made clear by evidence that the company has flexibly made funds available in order to ensure strategically valuable pieces of programming take place.

Though BP publicly promotes the 5-year deal as a fixed arrangement, it made funds available at short notice for a geopolitically useful festival at the British Museum. In response to an FOI request, the museum confirmed that:

'Funding provided by BP for the 'Days of the Dead Festival' is additional to its existing 5-year sponsorship arrangement with the British Museum.'⁵⁵

The festival is first mentioned in internal emails on 23rd June 2015, a mere four months before the event is due to take place, which is extraordinarily short notice in the museums sector.⁵⁶

At this time, BP was preparing to actively bid for new oil leases in the Gulf of Mexico, which were being auctioned by the Mexican government as part of the large-scale privatisation of the country's hitherto nationally controlled oil and gas sector.⁵⁷ In the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon spill, coastal communities across the Gulf of Mexico – on both the US and Mexican sides – are still struggling to recover from the damage to the local ecosystem and their livelihoods and health. But BP was determined to continue drilling in more places in the still-polluted Gulf. Ingratiating itself to the Mexican government by funding the Days of the Dead festival in such a prestigious museum looks like an obvious tactical move to improve its chances.

BP in Mexico

Recently, BP has been looking to take advantage of Mexican president Peña Nieto's controversial energy reforms,⁵⁸ and dramatically expand its involvement in the country. In BP's own words (since removed from its website) '[some of our 70 employees in Mexico are] focused on E&P [exploration and production], based on the new opportunities afforded by the landmark energy reform bill passed in December 2013, and which is currently in the implementation phase.'⁵⁹

Mexico's Energy Reform Act opens up the sector to foreign and private companies for the first time in decades. It also opens up vast swathes of Mexico to on- and offshore oil exploitation. The government is actively encouraging foreign companies to come in and exploit, extract and transport oil, using favourable tax conditions and royalties.

In September 2015, BP won its first bid to drill in shallow waters off Mexico's Gulf Coast. But its main interest was articulated by BP America Chairman and CEO John Minge on May 5 2014: he is 'excited' about the possibilities for BP in Mexico, particularly in the offshore deepwater of the Gulf of Mexico.⁶⁰



'Deathly BP execs' and their best friend the 'Mexican President' attend the British Museum's BP-sponsored Days of the Dead festival. Photo: Diana More

The timing of the BP-funded Days of the Dead festival seems to be no coincidence, and fits neatly into BP's strategy for gaining access to Mexico's oil:

Dec 21 2013 - Mexico's Energy Reform Act becomes law.

Jan 1 2015 - British and Mexican governments launch 'UK-Mexico Dual Year' that would encompass culture, trade, investment, tourism, education, science and innovation.⁶¹

Mar 2 2015 - Bob Dudley gives a keynote speech at the Mexican Energy Reform Summit in London attended by British and Mexican ministers, expressing 'BP's interest in the opportunities that may lie ahead in the Mexican waters of the Gulf.'⁶²

Mar 2 2015 - BP and Shell sign an agreement with Mexico's investment promotion agency, ProMexico, to 'stimulate Mexico's oil and gas supply chain.'⁶³

Mar 5 2015 - State visit to Britain by President Nieto includes trip to Aberdeen to 'mark closer ties on energy and climate change'. UK and Mexican government sign a memorandum of understanding on 'Energy Cooperation...to support the sound future development of the energy sector in both Mexico and the UK', and another MOU that provides finance and support to help British oil companies begin to operate in Mexico.⁶⁴

Sep 30 2015 - BP wins its first Mexican contract, to drill in a shallow-water block off Mexico's Gulf coast.⁶⁵

Oct 30 - Nov 2 2015 - British Museum hosts a Days of the Dead festival, partnering with BP and the Mexican government. Senior BP staff and representatives of the Mexican government, including the Mexican Ambassador, attend a VIP reception during the festival.

Dec 17 2015 - Bidding terms for 10 deepwater and ultra-deepwater oil and gas areas published, kicking off the fourth phase of Mexico's Round One, which will continue throughout 2016.⁶⁶

Emails released as part of the same FOI request also confirm that strategic networking opportunities with the Mexican Ambassador and government representatives were provided as part of the Days of the Dead festival, details of which can be found in Section 3, ‘BP-sponsored decision makers’.

The sense that such events, including the Days of the Dead festival, are developed primarily to promote BP’s strategic interests is also borne out by the experience of staff in their day-to-day work. A British Museum employee who encountered this, told us on condition of anonymity:

‘The feeling from the majority of staff on events such as these is ‘why are we doing this?’ It has nothing to do with our current exhibition programme, it hasn’t been factored into carefully considered long-term strategic planning for the public programme and it’s an enormous drain on resources for teams who already feel as though they are working over capacity. The feeling is one of dismay really, followed by a gritting of teeth and an attitude of “let’s get through this as painlessly as possible”. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that the project is due to the whim of a funder, we have to deliver it and that we don’t have a choice in the matter.’

While the British Museum regularly claims to be ‘exceptionally grateful to BP for their loyal and ongoing support’, this incident clearly demonstrates that BP’s support for the institution is selective and based upon strategic business interests. This is further reinforced by emails from 2014 between the museum’s then-Chair of Trustees, Niall Fitzgerald, and BP, where it appears that the company may have brusquely turned down the opportunity to sponsor the British Museum’s new World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre.⁶⁷



Holmes and Watson seek corporate criminal BP in the British Museum. Photo: Kristian Buus

Ethical questions raised

This material suggests that the content and integrity of British Museum events has been compromised by its BP sponsorship. It appears that BP has sought to appropriate the British Museum’s programme in order to further its geopolitical business strategy, in partnership with a government responsible for widespread human rights abuses.

The International Council of Museums’ (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums states:

‘Income-generating activities should not compromise the standards of the institution or its public.’⁶⁸

Has the museum’s willingness to accommodate BP’s demands led to a breach of this code?

2c. Close Personal Relationships Between Senior Staff

Central to the continuation of BP's cultural sponsorship deals, and the maintenance of its social license to operate, has been the establishment of close personal relationships between senior members of staff at BP and at the respective institutions. These relationships allow BP to exercise 'soft power' and influence in a far less accountable way. Demanding emails to cultural partners, planning meetings at BP's offices and regular invitations to operas and ballets are all a part of this picture.

To give an example, when the National Portrait Gallery informed BP that their logo would not appear on the cover of one gallery publication, BP emailed the gallery's Deputy Director, Pim Baxter, directly questioning the decision. Following her reasoned explanation for the decision, BP responded abruptly: '...OK to go on this occasion, but one to discuss in our catch ups.'⁶⁹

Further emails have revealed regular communications and meetings between staff at BP and staff working at BP-sponsored cultural institutions, often senior staff. While there are too many to include in this report, a number of these emails vividly show the familiarity and intimacy of these relationships. On one occasion, a staff member at the National Portrait Gallery wrote to a member of staff at BP:

*'Lovely to see you this morning. Enjoyed the Tate store visit hugely (thank you) as well as our back-of-a-cab chat about the state of the arts!'*⁷⁰

The staff member at BP replies:

*'Yes I value the opportunities to catch up out of the office.'*⁷¹

Personal relationships are not, in themselves, unethical, but in the context of curatorial influence and collusion over security procedures, it can be argued that BP's true motivation for fostering these relationships is to uphold a favourable power dynamic with its cultural partners.

This sits within a pattern of regular meetings taking place at BP's premises where decisions related to sponsorship arrangements are made in an environment where BP can establish itself as a dominant partner in discussions.⁷² The presence of a wider BP staff team and potentially high-level staff members in and around such meetings will very likely exert pressure upon representatives from sponsored institutions. If cultural institutions did wish to raise genuine ethical concerns, such a setting would make doing so potentially awkward or intimidating. This arrangement reflects the prioritising of the interests of BP above the protection of the public interest as a matter of course.

BP also offers entertainment opportunities to staff from its cultural partners on a regular basis, often at other BP-sponsored institutions and where VIP figures and policymakers may be present. One 'Urgent Invitation' from BP to a member of staff at Tate reads:

*'So sorry for lateness in this invitation but I've just been informed the tickets I've been waiting on for the opening performance of the ballet swan lake at the ROH have become available. I would be delighted if you were able to join me this Tuesday 10th February at the royal opera house... Sent from my iPad.'*⁷³

Neil MacGregor, the now ex-director of the British Museum, wrote the following to a member of BP staff:

*'I am sorry that I was unable to join you at Rigoletto last night although I am pleased that Joanna Mackle [British Museum Deputy Director] was able to attend in my place. I understand that the [Royal Opera House] [BP] Big Screen event was a tremendous success.'*⁷⁴

Perhaps the most revealing communication between MacGregor and BP took place on New Year's Eve 2014 at 18.39. Both the timing and language of the communication are revealing of a close personal friendship where the use of 'soft power' could be easily exerted.



Two fake 'BP executives' flash their oily cash as part of an Art Not Oil 'protest festival' in the British Museum. Photo: Natasha Quarmby

MacGregor writes directly to a member of BP staff following the announcement of their resignation:

I have just seen your email and want to say how very sad I am that you are leaving BP and that we shall no longer be working together – at least not in that capacity.

I have very much enjoyed every aspect of our co-operation and have always known that we were working towards the same end – and working happily and humorously as well.

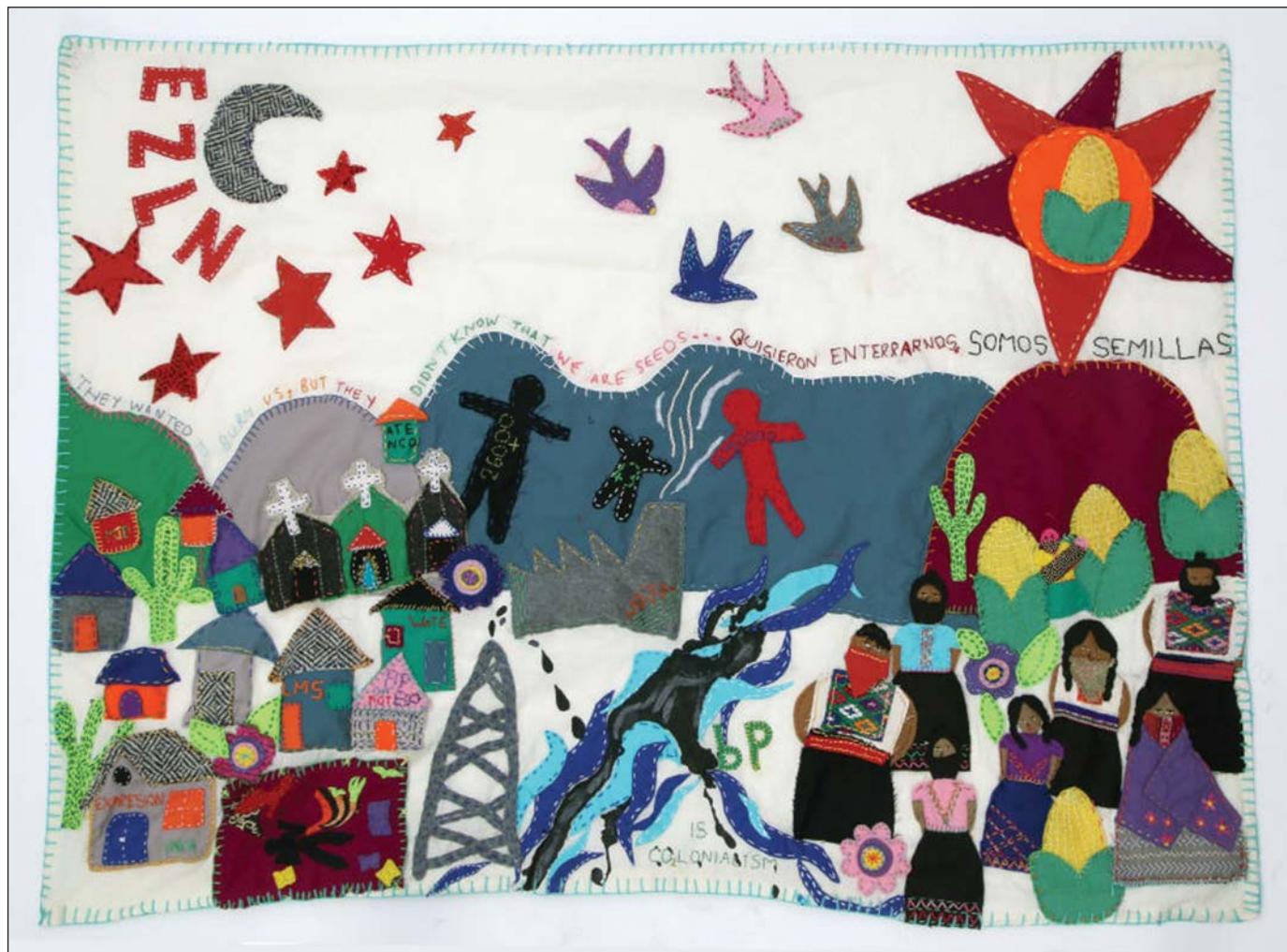
There will, I hope, be a chance to meet, and to mark and celebrate what we have achieved together before you leave. This comes merely to say THANK YOU, and to wish you many good things in 2015.⁷⁵

BP's capacity to maintain these high-level relationships and exert influence across its so-called 'cultural partners' is underpinned by an external consultancy, the Boster Group, which facilitates engagement and helps to sustain BP's dominant position in the arts and culture sector.

It lists among its 'cultural clients and partners' Tate, the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum and the Royal Opera House – the partners of BP's block 5-year deal – alongside the Science Museum and the Royal Shakespeare Company, who also receive BP sponsorship.⁷⁶ In one email sent by the National Portrait Gallery to BP, the integral role of the Boster Group in maintaining BP's relationships with its cultural partners, both formal and personal, is made clear. It also reveals that this network of sponsored institutions has become so embedded that staff now actively work to promote and sustain it, and by extension, the interests of BP.

The following email had several people copied in, including the National Portrait Gallery's Deputy Director, Pim Baxter:

'We have been offered the opportunity to extend this exclusive invitation to the studio of leading British photographer [name redacted] to a small number of selected guests, and I wondered whether it might be of interest to you, the Boster Group BP team, and representatives of BP's other cultural partners? Perhaps [name redacted] or [name redacted] could help me extend the invitation to BP's other cultural partners'⁷⁷



“Arpillera” - a tapestry reflecting the relationship between BP and the Mexican government made for the ‘History of BP in 10 Objects’ exhibition by London Mexico Solidarity, Movimiento Jaguar Despierto, the Wretched of the Earth and Expresión Inca. The words top right are taken from an old Mexican saying: “They wanted to bury us but they did not know that we are seeds.” See: historyofbp.org Photo: Diana More

In this context, Des Violaris's testimonial on the value of the Boster Group for BP is particularly telling:

Boster Group’s...intelligent grasp of our core business priorities, combined with a remarkable affinity for the cultural institutions we support, has added new dimensions to our relationships with both staff and our arts and culture partners...⁷⁸

Also, one of the services the Boster Group offers its clients is, ‘Influencer Marketing – Understanding the role of decision makers and advocates, knowing how to engage them effectively.’⁷⁹ This service is particularly significant to the final section of this report – ‘BP-sponsored policymakers.’

Ethical questions raised

As noted earlier, Nolan’s Seven Principles of Public Life, cited within the Ethical Policies of both the British Museum and Tate, states: ‘Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.’

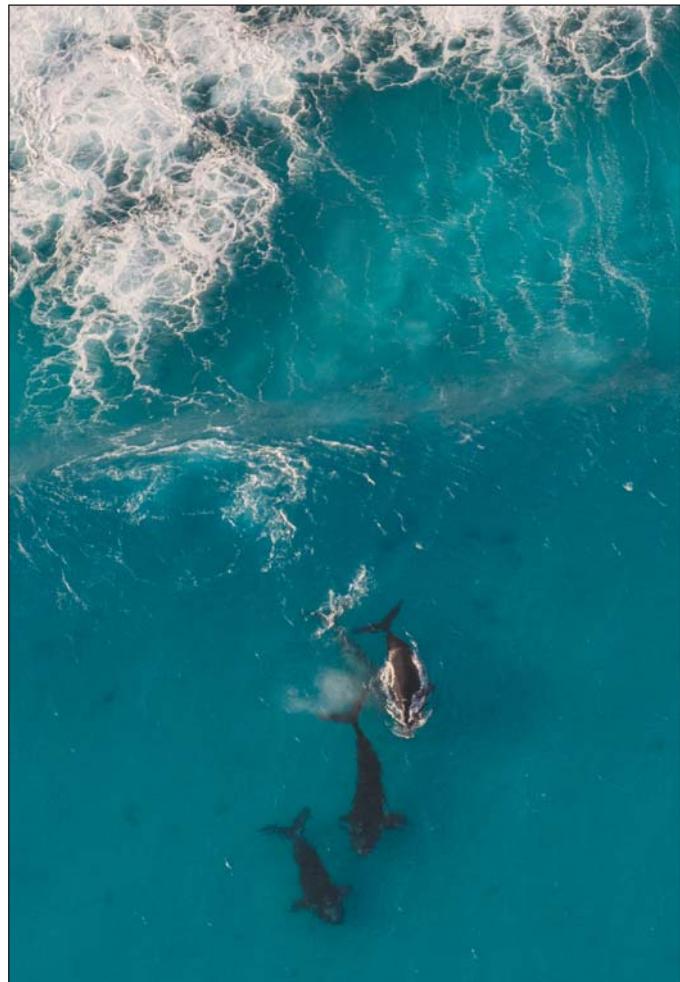
And also: ‘Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.’

Do the close personal relationships, evenings out and meetings at BP HQ put staff under an obligation to BP that might conflict with their duty to always operate in the public interest?

BP-sponsored policymakers

Emails uncovered through FOI requests have shown that BP uses our publicly-funded museums and galleries as spaces to wine and dine ministers, and open potential doors to new business deals. We have identified that:

- BP has established high-level relationships at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), enjoying regular private meetings and issuing personal invitations from BP's CEO to the Secretary of State to private launch events.
- BP sought to use its sponsorship relationships to enhance its own lobbying ahead of the 2015 General Election.
- BP used its cultural partnerships to secure private meetings and VIP reception events with government officials from countries of strategic interest to the company, such as Mexico and Australia, and the British Museum even requested the Mexican Embassy delete the invitation list for one such VIP reception with BP.



*Southern right whales in the Great Australian Bight, where BP is trying to drill four deepwater oil wells.
Photo: Peta North & The Wilderness Society*

3a. Privileged Access to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

BP uses its sponsorship deals to curry favour with politicians and policymakers, both directly and indirectly. By promoting its brand within museums and galleries, BP can secure its 'social licence to operate', framing itself as a good corporate citizen in the eyes of those in positions of power.

However, BP also uses its sponsorship deals to further its direct engagement with policymakers, both at events in the institutions it sponsors and at government premises. This activity, as part of BP's Arts and Culture programme, is a key element of the company's broader lobbying strategy.

Its a strategy that has, to give just two examples, diluted and derailed crucial climate change legislation⁸⁰ and opposed key sanctions on Russia during the escalating conflict in Crimea and Ukraine.⁸¹

According to Ian Conn, BP's Chief Executive for Refining and Marketing, BP's sponsorship deals go through 'exactly the same processes as we would for any investment'. He cited several key aims of its sponsorship programme as being 'brand protection and connection with customers and society', and to 'enhance our relationship with strategic commercial partners.'⁸²

An FOI request to DCMS revealed that just a month after the 2015 UK General Election, Des Violaris and Andrew Minnear (UK Government Affairs, BP) met with the Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey. The notes from the meeting highlighted that DCMS's support of BP and its cultural programme:

[Des Violaris]...ran through BPs long history of association with the arts and EV recognised these achievements... [Des Violaris] added BP were also now looking more actively at support for sports and were grateful for securing attendance at the Baku Games... Concluding, [Ed Vaizey] welcomed BP support for the Cosmonauts [exhibition at the Science Museum]'⁸³

The second half of these meeting notes were largely redacted, with section 35 (1) (a) and section 35 (1) (d) of the Act being cited as reasons for withholding material:

Information held by a government department...is exempt information if it relates to (a) the formulation or development of government policy...(d) the operation of any Ministerial private office.'

Rather than dispel concerns about BP's influence over government policy, the use of these exemptions confirm that material discussed with BP related directly to the development of government policy.

For a company whose primary activity does not fall within the realm of culture, media and sport, to hold private meetings with the department's minister(s) and discuss the formation of government policy can only be described as privileged access. We have appealed the decision to redact this material. As part of the same request, it was confirmed that, since 11th May 2015, BP had:

- Invited the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, John Whittingdale MP, to attend a dinner to mark the opening of the Cosmonauts exhibition at the Science Museum, hosted by the Science Museum and BP. BP's CEO, Bob Dudley, made the initial invitation personally. The Secretary of State accepted the invitation and attended the dinner.

• Invited the Secretary of State to attend the BP Annual Business Reception at the British Museum on Thursday 12th November 2015. A separate FOI to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills confirmed that Baroness Neville-Rolfe 'popped in' to this Reception.⁸⁴

- Invited the Secretary of State to attend the BP-sponsored evening performance given by the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition prize-winning artists, and conducted by Maestro Valery Gergiev. This invitation was made by BP Russia.
- Invited Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, Ed Vaizey MP, to attend the BP Portrait Award on 17th July. It appears that Ed Vaizey's invitation to the BP Portrait Award was proposed by a member of BP staff in an email to the National Portrait Gallery on the 12th May 2015, just after the General Election and appointment of ministers.⁸⁵
- Invited the Secretary of State to a BP-sponsored evening performance of Romeo and Juliet conducted by Maestro Valery Gergiev on Monday 18 April 2016 at Cadogan Hall. The Russian Ambassador was also in attendance. Peter Charrow, Vice-President of BP Russia, made the invitation.
- Invited the Secretary of State to a private dinner for the Vogue 100 exhibition on Monday 8 February 2016.⁸⁶

The Secretary of State's enthusiasm to attend the dinner at the Science Museum was apparent, in an email from his Diary Secretary:

I know the Secretary of State is very keen to attend and would also like to join the dinner that Mr Mather may host afterwards, unfortunately I would need to see if it was possible to amend the diary for that evening. Could you perhaps let me know if the dinner has been confirmed? I will check with colleagues here to resolve our diary clash.'⁸⁷

Emails released by Tate also show that BP receives a 'Weekly Email from Ed Vaizey's Culture and Creative Industries Team'. One particular email, forwarded by BP to a member of Tate's staff, outlined Ed Vaizey's activity generally and on social media.



Gideon Mendel's Drowning World photos at Tate Modern as part of Deadline Festival Photo: Platform/Martin Lesanto-Smith

The gallery's Bring Your Tribe festival for families and the British Museum's Days of the Dead festival, both sponsored by BP, were given top billing in the 'Museums and Galleries' summary and tweeted about by the minister. In response to this email, the staff member at Tate replies, 'Great – need to do a whole advocacy piece for the displays!!'⁸⁸

BP is also willing to put pressure on institutions in order to ensure that it gets maximum brand exposure from its sponsorship deals, both publicly and with policymakers. In one email from February 2015, BP demanded performance targets for the BP Portrait Award from the National Portrait Gallery, including:

'A significant increase in the number of VIPs attending to at least 50 and a breakdown of who they are including govt representatives.'

In response, the National Portrait Gallery writes:

*'Please be assured that we will aim, as always, not only to achieve but ideally to exceed our exhibition visitor target, and to maintain the consistently high levels of sponsor recognition through our marketing campaigns and onsite branding. And we will continue to invite VIPs to the key events, which of course you and your colleagues at BP are also very welcome to do.'*⁸⁹

While the official line from BP is that it wishes to support UK arts and culture with 'no strings attached' – and, from the cultural institutions it sponsors, that BP is a generous and loyal partner – the company's desire to maintain its position of influence is not concealed. Des Violaris, Head of UK Arts and Culture for BP, candidly lists her 'key achievements' on her LinkedIn page:

'Developed a strategic model and approach for corporate support of the arts that delivers reputational value to the organisation'

And also:

'Positioned the company as the leading corporate supporter of UK arts & culture as recognised by government bodies including DCMS.'



Visitors to the British Museum look at oil from BP's Gulf Coast spill as part of "A History of BP in 10 Objects." Photo: Amy Scaife

3b. Election Advocacy with the Science Museum

While BP's sponsorship relationship with the Science Museum falls outside of the block 5-year deal, it is still significant to the company both in relation to the maintenance of its social licence to operate and the opportunities it offers for influencing government. Much of the controversy around oil sponsorship at the Science Museum has, to date, focussed on the institution's relationship with Shell and the company's influence over the Atmosphere climate science exhibition. However, BP collaborates with the museum on the Ultimate STEM Challenge, a science and engineering competition for Key Stage 3 school students, and was recently the major sponsor of the museum's Cosmonauts exhibition.

The capacity to influence government via this sponsorship deal has been at the forefront of BP's thinking. As noted above, BP successfully secured the Secretary of State's attendance at the dinner marking the opening of the Cosmonauts exhibition. Ahead of the UK 2015 General Election, a member of Science Museum staff attempted to reschedule a meeting with BP in which an 'advocacy plan' for the May election was to be discussed. In reply to this email, BP makes its priorities clear:

'Neither [name redacted] or I understand your reasons for postponing this meeting...[Name redacted] has mentioned in passing that you are preparing an advocacy plan for the upcoming general election – an April meeting is too late to see what is possible for mutual support. Please can we reinstate the meeting as originally planned?'

The Science Museum capitulates:

'Yes, that's fine, we can re-instate the meeting ... I suggest that we give a nod to the projects in case anyone wants to raise anything, and then focus purely on points 2 and 3 of the agenda - communication (including election advocacy) and 'raising the bar.'⁹⁰



Poster for the BP-sponsored Cosmonauts exhibition at the Science Museum. Photo (cc) Paul Hudson

The limited information released by the Science Museum does not make clear what form this 'election advocacy' ultimately took. However, a subsequent news update from the Science Museum to BP on 1st April 2015 suggests one possible outcome:

'By now all MPs and Lords will have received our new STEM document, with which you are already familiar!'⁹¹

Ethical questions raised by sections 3a & 3b

BP uses its relationship with cultural institutions to further its own engagement with policymakers, both via privileged access to meetings and events, and a close alignment with high-profile 'trusted voices' from the cultural world – something the Science Museum promotes as a key benefit of corporate sponsorship.⁹² This ensures that these dialogues with policymakers take place in settings where any ethical concerns are downplayed or their significance mitigated.

Is it appropriate for cultural institutions to allow themselves to be used in this way, to further the aims of an oil company? Do BP's attempts to influence and shape the Science Museum's advocacy plan for the General Election for 'mutual benefit' politicise the museum and compromise its independence?

3c. Gaining Access to Strategically Valuable Policymakers Internationally

BP's cultural sponsorship programme offers key opportunities to curry favour with policymakers and influential figures in countries that sit within the company's strategic business goals. The British Museum in particular has provided a valuable setting for these encounters to take place. In addition to exhibition launches attended by a wide variety of VIPs, which have included HRH Prince Charles and the Mexican Ambassador, BP's direct involvement in the planning stages of exhibitions has allowed its representatives to attend private meetings with governmental bodies, bolstered by the social legitimacy of British Museum staff members being present.

While details of specific oil and gas extraction deals and projects are not recorded as being discussed at these meetings, informal conversations and strategic networking could easily have taken place. These encounters between BP and governmental representatives lay a crucial foundation for solidifying relationships that can lead to significant business benefits for the oil company.

An example already mentioned in section 2b is the BP-sponsored Days of the Dead festival. This was held from 30 October to 2 November 2015 at the British Museum, and provided BP with a valuable geopolitical influencing opportunity.

At the same time as the company was preparing to bid for deepwater drilling licenses in the Gulf of Mexico⁹³, to be granted by the Mexican government, BP gave additional funds to the British Museum beyond its existing sponsorship deal, allowing it to sponsor the festival celebrating Mexican culture, in association with the Mexican government. See the box on page 21 for details on why the timing of this event was so strategically beneficial to BP.

While the specific financial details of the sponsorship deal were not made available following a FOI request, the tangible benefits in terms of networking opportunities for BP were clear:

'As part of the British Museum's Days of the Dead festival... we will be holding a VIP reception for 100 invited guests from 6.45pm – 9.00pm on Friday 30th October. The reception, which will be held in the Great Court restaurant, will feature Mexican-inspired canapés and entertainment will be provided by roaming parades and Mariachi bands entertaining the public as they enjoy the festival taking place in the rest of the Great Court.'

'The invitation list for the event will include His Excellency the Ambassador of Mexico, members of the Mexican Government, representatives from BP and other companies and VIP contacts of the museum.'⁹⁴

This was a clear priority for BP, as this email to the British Museum, sent some weeks earlier on Saturday 10th October, shows:

*'Ladies – I hope you are enjoying the weekend. A couple of things from me:
...Do we have confirmation of Mexican government representation on the evening 30 October? Do we have confirmation from DCMS re UK Government representation on the evening of 30 October?'*

When the British Museum's Head of Events emails the Mexican Embassy about the guest list for the VIP reception, they note:

*"As we discussed the spreadsheet is password protected and I will email you the password separately. Please note this document can only be shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and should be deleted as soon as it is no longer required."*⁹⁵

On other occasions, the British Museum is keen to promote and celebrate the presence of VIPs at its events. For this event, the opposite appears to have been the case.

The global nature of the British Museum's exhibitions has also proved advantageous to BP on other occasions. For example, as the company was pushing forward on its controversial plans to drill four new ultra-deepwater wells off the south coast of Australia in a protected area known as the Great Australian Bight, it was sponsoring the museum's high-profile Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation exhibition in summer 2015.

In July 2014, as the process for getting permission to drill in this very sensitive location was moving forward in Australia, BP attended a meeting at Australia House on the Strand with representatives of the British Museum and the Australian High Commission. The Agenda simply reads:

'Update on content, loans and development of the exhibition [redaction]
BP sponsorship of the Exhibition [redaction]
Australian High Commission involvement'⁹⁶



*Bunna Lawrie, Indigenous Mirning Traditional Owner who is opposing BP's drilling plans in Australia. See: historyofbp.org
Photo: Brad Leue & The Wilderness Society*

The geopolitical strategy behind such sponsorship choices on BP's part is clear from its attempt to also sponsor the Indigenous Australia exhibition when it moved to the National Museum of Australia. With BP sponsorship secured for the London leg of the show, BP tried to attach its logo to its subsequent transfer to Australia. This was revealed in an email to Des Volaris, sent on 24th July 2014:

BP in Australia

Jan 2011 - BP receives permits from the Australian and South Australian governments to undertake exploration for oil in the Great Australian Bight, just one year after the Gulf of Mexico spill.⁹⁸

Nov 2011 – May 2012 - BP undertakes seismic surveys of the Bight.⁹⁹

Apr 23 – Aug 2nd 2015 - Indigenous Australia, Enduring Civilisation Exhibition takes place at the British Museum just as new regulatory hurdles are upcoming.¹⁰⁰

Jun 30 2015 - Applications for the "BP-Statoil Community Grants" scheme for community organisations on the Eyre and Le Fevre Peninsula passes, the region where the drilling programme would have its greatest impact.¹⁰¹

Oct 1 2015 - BP submits drilling plan for Great Australian Bight to the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA).¹⁰²

Nov 17 2015 - NOPSEMA rejects BP's initial plan for the Bight, details of why are not made public.¹⁰³

Nov 27 2015 - Australian leg of Indigenous Australia opens at the National Museum of Australia as the Encounters exhibition.¹⁰⁴

Feb 22 2016 - Australian Senate refer matter of oil and gas drilling in the Bight for inquiry.¹⁰⁵

Mar 28 2016 - Encounters exhibition closes.

Apr 1st 2016 - Submission for the Australian Senate Inquiry into drilling in the Bight closes.

Apl 14 2016 - BP faces strong opposition at its AGM over its proposals for the Bight and encounters shareholder rebellion over CEO's pay package.

May 12 2016 - Deadline by which Australian Senate Inquiry is due to report back.

'Further to our conversation earlier this week please find an update on Australia related points:

The NMA [National Museum of Australia] have not confirmed that they have secured sponsorship for the exhibition so it is a high possibility they are still looking. If you are interested in speaking to them, we have had contact with: [Redaction] However other good contacts would be [redaction] and [redaction] but they work more on the organisational side with us...'⁹⁷

The British Museum's help in facilitating this relationship could have secured further privileged access to Australian policymakers for BP – as well as boosting its public profile – at a key moment in the development of the company's drilling plans for the Great Australian Bight. In the event, BP did not secure sponsorship for the Australian leg of the exhibition.



The Science Museum's Director Ian Blatchford receives the Pushkin medal from Vladimir Putin Photo: the Kremlin

At the Science Museum, BP has worked to leverage lobbying and networking opportunities from its sponsorship of Cosmonauts, an exhibition on Russian space exploration. BP is a major operator in Russia, holding a 19.75% stake in massive state oil company Rosneft, making it the largest shareholder after the Russian government. Rosneft is probably Russia's worst polluter,¹⁰⁶ responsible for multiple spills and leaks, including once causing oil to flow out of domestic taps.¹⁰⁷ BP has lobbied against sanctions linked to the conflict in Ukraine, which have put plans to drill in the Arctic with Rosneft on ice.¹⁰⁸

In what appears to be an attempt to maximise opportunities for engagement and influence, a member of BP staff emails the Science Museum on the 20th March 2015 and attempts to influence the launch date of the exhibition:

'Thanks for the catch-up yesterday. We discussed likely dates for announcing our sponsorship and the opening date. Please can you focus on w/c 18 and 25 May rather than earlier. 1-9 May are Russia holidays so you'd struggle to engage senior officials then, and the following week our senior Russia team are not in the country. You should also be aware that the US courts could rule at any time on our trials, which could just as easily be whichever day we choose for this announcement!'¹⁰⁹

While it is not stated explicitly, this demonstrates an awareness that the announcement of the outcome of the Deepwater Horizon trials could undermine the potential positive benefits of announcing BP's sponsorship of the exhibition, or perhaps tie BP staff up so they are unable to maximise the influencing opportunities of the launch. BP's own press release regarding the announcement of the sponsorship and exhibition was published on the 21st May 2015, a date in line with BP's request. In a subsequent email from the Science Museum to BP, announcing details of the PR launch, a museum employee also notes that:

*'We're also anticipating the Russian PR launch [for the exhibition] will take place on 9th June at the Queen's birthday party in the Russian Embassy in Moscow.'*¹¹⁰

It is noteworthy that the Science Museum's director, Ian Blatchford, subsequently '...received the Pushkin Medal from Russian President Vladimir Putin to recognise his role, and that of the Science Museum, in creating the acclaimed Cosmonauts: Birth of the Space Age exhibition.'¹¹¹ With recognition of the exhibition at the highest possible level, BP will have acquired valuable legitimacy in the eyes of the Russian government, and perhaps helped improve Russia's reputation amongst key UK policymakers.

Ethical questions raised

By strategically targeting exhibitions with an international component that involve partnerships with high-level representatives in countries where BP has, or is pursuing, business interests, the company secures the maximum possible influence in return for what are negligible sponsorship contributions in the company's eyes.

The cultural institutions are facilitating highly controversial partnerships between one of the world's biggest polluters, and oppressive regimes such as Russia, Mexico, and now Egypt (the focus of the British Museum's next big BP-sponsored exhibition, Sunken Cities). They are also helping BP to improve its reputation in countries where it's facing major public opposition, such as Australia.

According to Article 3.6 of the MA's Code of Ethics, museums should 'seek support from organisations whose ethical values are consistent with those of the museum. Exercise due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of commercial partners with a view to maintaining public trust and integrity in all museum activities.'

Are BP's business activities around the world consistent with the values of the institutions that take its money? Could the role that cultural institutions play in helping BP to carry out these activities have a damaging impact on public trust and integrity?



BP petcoke processing plant in Whiting, Indiana
Photo: Terry Evans



Child takes part in Idku's march against BP
Photo: Mika Minio-Paluello

The British Museum's Policy on Sustainable Development states:

Article 1.2 – 'The British Museum is committed to sustainable development throughout all the aspects of its operation.' and Article 2.2 – 'The British Museum will endeavour to incorporate sustainable development issues into future policy decision making at all levels.'

Given that BP is, historically, the third highest carbon-emitting company in the world, and continues to pursue the extraction of more and dirtier fossil fuels, it is clearly incompatible with sustainable development.¹¹² By helping to promote BP's brand, how can the British Museum be committing to sustainable development in all aspects of its operation, or incorporating it into its policy decision making?

It is now well-established that BP's business plan is incompatible with the shift away from fossil fuels required to maintain a liveable planet. By supporting this company, are publicly-funded cultural institutions complicit in corporate activities that sideline human rights and are driving the world into runaway climate change?

List of Appendices

1. Invitation to security meeting, BP to National Portrait Gallery on 15.01.15 (FOI Request made to NPG on 14.06.15)
2. Invitation and confirmation of security meeting, BP to Tate - date redacted (FOI request made to Tate on 31.07.15)
3. British Museum response to questions regarding security procedures on 15.02.16 (FOI request made to BM on 18.01.16)
4. Tate response to questions regarding security procedures on 15.02.16 (FOI request made on 18.01.16)
5. National Portrait Gallery response to questions regarding security procedures and response to internal review (FOI request made on 18.01.16)
6. National Portrait Gallery received invitation to 3rd February security meeting on 15.01.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
7. Invitation to security meeting, BP to Science Museum on 15.01.15 (FOI request made on 23.05.15)
8. Science Museum's response to a request for internal review made on 03.03.16 (Request made 10.02.16)
9. National Portrait Gallery's correspondence with BP in relation to Counter Terrorism Training (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
10. National Portrait Gallery confirms second attendee for Counter Terrorism Training (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
11. BP sends invitation to Tate for Counter Terrorism Training (FOI request made on 31.07.15)
12. Tate confirms attendees for Counter Terrorism Training (FOI request made on 31.07.15)
13. National Portrait Gallery send BP Agenda Updates on 02.04.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
14. Tate corresponds with BP over perceived protest threat on 21.01.15 (FOI request made on 31.07.15)
15. British Museum and BP's action points from Indigenous Australia meeting on 08.04.15 (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
16. British Museum response to questions regarding security procedures on 04.11.15 (FOI request made on 07.10.15)
17. British Museum response to additional questions on security procedures on 15.02.16 (FOI request made on 18.01.16)
18. British Museum responds to request for internal review on 22.03.16 (Request for review made on 18.02.16)
19. BP notifies Tate of planned action after climate march in email on 19.02.16 (FOI request made on 31.07.15)
20. BP passes intelligence to Scottish National Portrait Gallery on 25.02.16 (FOI request made on 01.03.16)
21. BP informs partners of PCS motion against oil sponsorship on 20.05.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
22. Science Museum discloses details of BP security meetings on 28.01.16 (FOI request made on 18.01.16)
23. British Museum Marketing Slide for Indigenous Australia (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
24. Action points from a joint meeting on Indigenous Australia taking place on 28.01.15 (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
25. British Museum and BP combined press briefing sheet (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
26. BP exhibition agreement letter for Indigenous Australia dated 27.08.13 (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
27. BP given approval on selection of painting for Indigenous Australia in email on 17.02.14 (FOI request made on 08.06.15)

28. BP explores sponsorship of National Museum of Australia tour of Indigenous Australia exhibition in email on 24.07.14 (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
29. BP given approval of Family Trail for Portrait Award on 18.05.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
30. BP and National Portrait Gallery comment on a "controversial artist" (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
31. BP's promotional material for Science Museum 'Energy' gallery - online document no longer available
32. British Museum confirms BP provided additional funds for Days of the Dead festival and related publicity email (FOI request made on 21.10.15)
33. BP responds to opportunity to fund World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre on 02.06.14 (FOI request made on 03.03.15)
34. BP objects to lack of logo on National Portrait Gallery publication on 17.02.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
35. BP staff enjoys close relationship to National Portrait Gallery staff (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
36. Tate responds to BP invitation to ballet on 09.02.15 (FOI request made on 31.07.15)
37. Neil MacGregor sends apologies to BP for not attending opera in email on 18.09.14 (FOI request made on 03.03.15)
38. Neil MacGregor writes to leaving BP staff member on 31.12.14 (FOI request made on 03.03.15)
39. National Portrait Gallery staff member seeks assistance to promote studio visit to BP's cultural partners on 18.05.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
40. Notes disclosed by DCMS for meeting with BP taking place on 09.06.15 (FOI request made on 19.10.15)
41. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills confirms Baroness Neville-Rolfe will attend BP's Business Reception (FOI request made on 25.02.16)
42. DCMS responds to request to confirm details of meetings and invitations from BP (FOI request made on 19.10.15)
43. BP appear to encourage National Portrait Gallery to invite DCMS minister in email on 12.05.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
44. DCMS discloses details of further meetings and invitations from BP (FOI request made on 23.02.16)
45. BP informs Tate of DCMS support for activity in email on 09.10.15 (FOI request made on 16.10.15)
46. National Portrait Gallery responds to BP's targets for KPIs in email on 17.02.15 (FOI request made on 14.06.15)
47. BP gets meeting on election advocacy with Science Museum reinstated in email on 09.01.15 (FOI request made on 23.05.15)
48. Science Museum provides BP with a series of updates in email on 01.04.15 (FOI request made on 23.05.15)
49. British Museum confirms plan for BP staff, Mexican Ambassador and Mexican Politicians to attend VIP Days of the Dead event (FOI request made on 21.10.15)
50. BP press British Museum for Mexican Government members to attend VIP event in email on 10.10.15 and museum requests invitation list deleted (FOI request made on 21.10.15)
51. Agenda for meeting on 01.07.14 confirms collaboration between BP, British Museum and Australian High Commission (FOI request made on 08.06.15)
52. BP influences launch date for Science Museum's Cosmonauts exhibition in email on 20.03.15 (FOI request made on 23.05.15)
53. Science Museum confirms launch date of Cosmonauts exhibition to BP in email on 13.04.15 (FOI request made on 23.05.15)

Endnotes

- 1 It is generally agreed that around 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels must stay in the ground if we are to have a 75% chance of remaining within the internationally agreed limit of 2 degrees Celsius, or take seriously the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius which was incorporated into the UN climate deal in Paris at the end of 2015.
- 2 For more information on how BP has used sponsorship deals to enhance its reputation among key audiences, see John Reynold's article, 'BP's brand image benefits from London 2012 sponsorship, claims research', *Marketing Magazine*, 17th February 2012.
www.marketingmagazine.co.uk/article/1117665/bps-brand-image-benefits-london-2012-sponsorship-claims-research
- 3 Quoted at the BP AGM, April 2016. See <http://bp-or-not-bp.org/news/the-bp-agm-shareholder-rebellion-and-almostbeing-ejected/>
- 4 For five reasons why BP's reason doesn't seem plausible, see <http://newint.org/blog/2016/04/07/bp-sponsorship-endexcuses/>
- 5 See <http://platformlondon.org/p-pressreleases/edinburgh-festival-british-museum-bp-poll/>
- 6 Calculations made by the campaign organisation, Platform, showed that if BP's £10 million payment to the four cultural institutions was divided equally, it would represent the following proportions of each institution's budget: 0.4% of the British Museum's income; 0.3% of Tate's income; 0.5% of the Royal Opera House's income; 2.9% of the National Portrait Gallery's income. See: <http://platformlondon.org/p-publications/artoilinfographic/>
- 7 <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/apr/03/mark-ruffalo-british-museum-drop-bp-sponsorship-letter-oil>
- 8 See the work of members of the Art Not Oil coalition: artnotoil.org.uk
- 9 See Appendix 1 - Invitation to security meeting, BP to National Portrait Gallery, and Appendix 2 - Invitation and confirmation of security meeting, BP to Tate.
- 10 See Appendix 3 - British Museum response to questions regarding security procedures
- 11 See Appendix 4 - Tate response to questions regarding security procedures
- 12 See Appendix 5 - National Portrait Gallery response to questions regarding security procedures and response to internal review, and Appendix 6 - National Portrait Gallery received invitation to 3rd February security meeting
- 13 See Appendix 7 - Invitation to security meeting, BP to Science Museum, and Appendix 8 - Science Museum's response to a request for internal review
- 14 For further details regarding this request, please contact Art Not Oil directly.
- 15 The agenda document included 15 further lines of redacted material deemed 'information not relevant to the request' underneath these Agenda Items. Following an internal review of the original request, Tate confirmed that this material is personal data 'in so far as it contains the names of individuals and their roles at organisations external to Tate.' See Appendix 4.
- 16 The email had six recipient emails addresses and four cc'd email addresses, all of which are redacted. See Appendix 9 - National Portrait Gallery's correspondence with BP in relation to Counter Terrorism Training, Appendix 10 - National Portrait Gallery confirms second attendee for Counter Terrorism Training, and Appendix 11 - BP sends invitation to Tate for Counter Terrorism Training
- 17 See Appendix 5
- 18 See Appendix 12 - Tate confirms attendees for Counter Terrorism Training
- 19 See Appendix 13 - National Portrait Gallery send BP Agenda Updates
- 20 See Appendix 8
- 21 For further details regarding this request, please contact Art Not Oil directly.
- 22 See Appendix 14 - Tate corresponds with BP over perceived protest threat
- 23 See Appendix 15 – British Museum and BP's action points from Indigenous Australia meeting
- 24 See Appendix 19 – BP notifies Tate of planned action after climate march
- 25 See Appendix 20 – BP passes intelligence to Scottish National Portrait Gallery

- 26 See Appendix 21 – BP informs partners of PCS motion against oil sponsorship. It is worth also noting that BP has a track record of monitoring the activities of campaigners who raise legitimate concerns about the company's environmental and human rights record. In 2012, campaigner and member of the Art Not Oil coalition, Jess Worth, carried out a Subject Access Request to BP, which revealed that its staff had engaged in monitoring and gathering intelligence on her campaigning activities, particularly around BP sponsorship of the World Shakespeare Festival and the London 2012 Olympics. More recent SARs by members of the Art Not Oil coalition have indicated that this monitoring is on-going but the full extent is less clear. See:
<http://newint.org/features/2014/11/01/myspy/>
- 27 See Appendix 22 – Science Museum discloses details of BP security meetings
- 28 See Appendix 8
- 29 The British Museum's Ethics Policy is available at:
www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Ethics.pdf
Tate's Ethics Policy is available at:
www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/37157
The Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums is available at
www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1155827
and the International Council of Museums Code of Ethics is available at:
http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf
- 30 See Appendix 5
- 31 See Appendix 5 and Appendix 8
- 32 See Appendix 16 – British Museum response to questions regarding security procedures
- 33 See Appendix 17 – British Museum response to additional questions on security procedure
- 34 See Appendix 18 – British Museum responds to request for internal review
- 35 The Information Commissioner's Office provides guidelines for organisations responding to Freedom of Information request, which is available at:
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/complaints/>
- 36 The Information Commissioner's Office provides guidelines for organisations responding to Freedom of Information request, which is available at:
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/complaints/>
- 37 See Mark Brown's article, 'Tate's BP sponsorship was £150,000 to £330,000 a year, figures show' in *The Guardian*, 26th January 2015.
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jan/26/tate-reveal-bp-sponsorship-150000-330000-platform-information-tribunal>
- 38 The Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums is available at:
www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1155827
- 39 Stated by the museum's communications team, in response to a letter from the campaign group BP or not BP?, which had been sent to BM trustee, Lord Stern, in 2015.
- 40 See Appendix 23 – British Museum Marketing Slide for Indigenous Australia
- 41 See Appendix 24 – Action points from a joint meeting on Indigenous Australia. See also the next section, '3. BP sponsored Policymakers'.
- 42 See Appendix 25 – British Museum and BP combined press briefing sheet
- 43 See Appendix 26 – BP exhibition agreement letter for Indigenous Australia
- 44 See Appendix 27 – BP given approval on selection of painting for Indigenous Australia
- 45 See Paul Daley's article, 'Enduring controversy: BP sponsorship ignites new row over British Museum's Indigenous exhibition' in *The Guardian*, 21st July 2015.
www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonialblog/2015/jul/21/enduring-controversy-bp-sponsorship-ignites-new-row-over-british-museums-indigenous-exhibition
- 46 See Appendix 28 – BP explores sponsorship of National Museum of Australia tour of Indigenous Australia exhibition
- 47 To view copies of these emails disclosed by the British Museum, please contact Art Not Oil directly.

- 48 See the Evening Standard article, 'Time for a shake-up of the Portrait Gallery's annual award', 8th July 2010.
www.standard.co.uk/arts/time-for-a-shake-up-of-the-portrait-galleries-annual-award-7420648.html
- For details of the BP Portrait Award judging protest as disclosed under a Freedom of Information request made on 1st July 2015, visit the website 'What do they know'.
www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/judging_criteria_for_bp_portrait#incoming-548272
- 49 See Appendix 29 – BP given approval of Family Trail for Portrait Award
- 50 See Appendix 30 – BP and National Portrait Gallery comment on a 'controversial artist'
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 See Appendix 31 – BP's promotional material for Science Museum 'Energy' gallery. Document originally available on BP's website at:
www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/STAGING/global_assets/downloads/B/BPM_05one_Energy.pdf
 Can now be accessed at:
https://web.archive.org/web/20100505062505/http://www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/STAGING/global_assets/downloads/B/BPM_05one_Energy.pdf
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 See Appendix 32 – British Museum confirms BP provided additional funds for Days of the Dead festival
- 56 See Appendix 32
- 57 For more information, see 'Mexico energy reform could create North American powerhouse' on BizJournals.com, 7th May 2015.
<http://www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/drilling-down/2014/05/mexico-energy-reform-could-create-northamerican.html>
- Also, see 'Undaunted Mexico presses deepwater auction' on *Argus Media*, 26th February 2016.
www.argusmedia.com/News/Article/?id=1195475
- 58 www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dc81bfcc-261c-11e5-bd83-71cb60e8f08c.html#axzz3pJHwAtkD
- 59 Retrieved from BP's website on 9 October 2015. Since removed.
- 60 www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/drilling-down/2014/05/mexico-energy-reform-could-create-north-american.html
- 61 <http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/reinounido/index.php/en/2015-year-of-mexico-in-the-united-kingdom>
- 62 www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/press/speeches/mexican-energy-reform-summit.html
www.gov.uk/government/news/mexican-energy-reform-offers-opportunities-for-uk-oil-and-gas-industry
- 64 www.gov.uk/government/news/mexican-energy-reform-offers-opportunities-for-uk-oil-and-gas-industry
- 65 www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-30/mexico-defies-oil-price-slump-as-60-percent-of-fields-auctioned
- 66 www.mayerbrown.com/Summary-of-Bidding-Terms-for-Mexico-Deep-Water-Areas-12-18-2015/
- 67 See Appendix 33 – BP responds to opportunity to fund World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre
- 68 The International Council of Museums Code of Ethics is available at: <http://icom.museum/the-vision/code-of-ethics/>
- 69 See Appendix 34 – BP objects to lack of logo on National Portrait Gallery publication
- 70 See Appendix 35 – BP staff enjoys close relationship to National Portrait Gallery staff
- 71 *Ibid.*
- 72 See Appendix 13
- 73 See Appendix 36 – Tate responds to BP invitation to ballet
- 74 See Appendix 37 – Neil MacGregor sends apologies to BP for not attending opera
- 75 See Appendix 38 - Neil MacGregor writes to leaving BP staff member
- 76 You can view the Boster Group's website at:
www.bostergroup.com/ Also see: Appendix 13
- 77 See Appendix 39 – National Portrait Gallery staff member seeks assistance to promote studio visit to BP's cultural partners
- 78 You can view Des Violaris's testimonial on the Boster Group and a list of the services it offers clients on its website at: www.bostergroup.com/services/
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/20/eu-dropped-climate-policies-after-bp-threat-oil-industry-exodus

- 81 See 'EU sanctions push on Russia falters amid big business lobbying', *FT*, 16th April 2014.
www.ft.com/cms/s/0/352f4f5c-c57c-11e3-97e4-00144feabdc0.html#slide0
- 82 Speaking at BP's 2012 AGM: www.no-tar-sands.org/2012/04/uk-tar-sands-networks-questions-to-the-2012-bpagm/
- 83 See Appendix 40 – Notes disclosed by DCMS for meeting with BP
- 84 See Appendix 41 – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills confirms Baroness Neville-Rolfe will attend BP's Business Reception
- 85 See Appendix 42 – DCMS responds to request to confirm details of meetings and invitations from BP, and also Appendix 43 – BP appear to encourage National Portrait Gallery to invite DCMS minister
- 86 See Appendix 44 – DCMS discloses details of further meetings and invitations from BP
- 87 *Ibid.*
- 88 See Appendix 45 – BP informs Tate of DCMS support for activity in email on 09.10.15
- 89 See Appendix 46 – National Portrait Gallery responds to BP's targets for KPIs
- 90 See Appendix 47 – BP gets meeting on election advocacy with Science Museum reinstated
- 91 See Appendix 48 – Science Museum provides BP with a series of updates
- 92 The Science Museum's Corporate Sponsorship webpage is available at:
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/about_us/support_us/corporate_sponsorship.aspx
- 93 See 'Undaunted Mexico presses deepwater auction' on *Argus Media*, 26th February 2016.
www.argusmedia.com/News/Article/?id=1195475
- 94 See Appendix 49 – British Museum confirms plan for BP staff, Mexican Ambassador and Mexican Politicians to attend VIP Days of the Dead event
- 95 See Appendix 50 – BP press British Museum for Mexican Government members to attend VIP event and museum requests invitation list deleted
- 96 See Appendix 51 – Agenda for meeting on 01.07.14 confirms collaboration between BP, British Museum and Australian High Commission
- 97 See Appendix 28
- 98 www.bp.com/en_au/australia/about-us/what-we-do/exploring.html
- 99 *Ibid.*
- 100 www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2015/indigenous_australia.aspx?fromShortUrl
- 101 www.bpgabproject.com.au/go/doc/5771/1805351/
- 102 www.fightfortheeight.org.au/about_the_campaign
- 103 www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/nov/17/bps-plans-to-drill-for-oil-in-the-great-australian-eight-knockedback
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- 108 <http://energydesk.greenpeace.org/2015/06/16/analysis-bps-russia-problem/>
- 109 See Appendix 52 – BP influences launch date for Science Museum's Cosmonauts exhibition
- 110 See Appendix 53 – Science Museum confirms launch date of Cosmonauts exhibition to BP
- 111 See 'Cosmonauts exhibition success leads to Pushkin Medal for Director of the Science Museum Ian Blatchford', Science Museum Press Release, 10th December 2015.
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/about_us/press_and_media/press_releases/2015/12/pushkin-medal.aspx
- 112 See: www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/science/largest-producers-industrial-carbonemissions.html#.VumLOtAfgv4

Back cover photos:

Main photo: BP petcoke processing plant in Whiting, Indiana. Photo: Terry Evans

Lower left: Australian Sea-lion.

Photo: Brad Leue & The Wilderness Society

Lower right: Southern Right Whales, Great Australian Bight. Photo: Peta North & The Wilderness Society



'Since 2010, there are a lot more graves in the Gulf of Mexico than there were before, and that's just the truth. So anytime we see arts organisations take on BP as a sponsor, we want to make sure those institutions understand that they are sponsoring death. They are sponsoring death in our communities.'

- Cherri Foytlin, US Gulf Coast resident



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