



## PRESS RELEASE

### **200-strong choir performs anti-BP concert in the British Museum** **Climate Choir Movement protests the British Museum's acceptance of a £50m "gift"** **from BP**

On Saturday [30th November] the Great Court of the British Museum was taken over by the Climate Choir Movement flash mob when around two hundred visitors at the British Museum café stood up and broke into three-part harmony to sing: *'It's time to drop BP! Don't take their dirty money!'*

The singers then processed to the entrance of the British Museum Great Court, the largest covered public square in Europe, and performed the classical hit *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss, complete with new anti-BP words. With this performance, the UK-based environmental choir network had pulled off their most dramatic stunt yet.

Three masked actors, representing museum director Nicholas Cullinan, BP boss Murray Auchincloss and chair of museum trustees George Osborne, paraded with the choir, while a massive banner declaring 'Drop BP' was suspended above the Great Court. A second banner declared 'Human Culture from the Beginning to the End: The British Museum with British Petroleum'. Their message was clear. It was time for the British Museum to drop its controversial financial deal with BP.



**HUMAN CULTURE  
FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END**  
**The British Museum with British Petroleum**



Last year it was announced that the British Museum's exhibitions would no longer be BP-branded after its existing 5-year sponsorship wasn't renewed. However, the Museum has

continued working with the oil giant in a different way – by controversially accepting [£50m](#) from BP towards its 10-year redevelopment plan. Critics of the deal have also pointed out the conflict of interest in the Chair of the Museum and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne having [multiple links with BP](#).

This year has seen multiple catastrophic climate events, and is set to be [the hottest year](#) ever on record with [floods, drought](#), and [heat killing thousands](#). Against this backdrop, [BP has scaled back climate targets](#) while making profits of billions of dollars. It has also [abandoned](#) its goal to cut oil output by 2030. BP has also been [accused of fuelling](#) the ongoing genocide in Gaza by providing [oil to refineries](#) that produce fuel for IDF war planes. Previously, the oil giant was also awarded [oil licences](#) from Israel in waters off the coast of Gaza.

The highly controversial decision to take BP's dirty money has only added to the ongoing debate about ethical fundraising and sponsorship in the culture sector, with it initially [causing concern](#) among trustees and appearing to lead to Muriel Gray's resignation from the Board. In June this year, the director of Tate, Maria Balshaw, [spoke out](#) about BP's sponsorship deal, saying that "the public has moved to a position where they think it is inappropriate".

Climate Choir Movement musical director Kai Honey, who arranged the songs, said,

"The British Museum showcases objects from cultures and countries across the world. By slashing their renewable energy division, BP is contributing to the collapse of the world's stable climate, out of which human cultures arose. BP is not giving money to the British Museum out of the goodness of its heart. This is a strategic decision to look like a responsible company, to gain social consent for continued oil and gas exploration".

Climate Choir co-founder Jo Flanagan added,

"We now know, due to recently unearthed documents, that major oil companies including BP were alerted to the planet-warming effects of fossil fuels as early as 1954, that the product they profited from could pose a threat to the stability of the Earth's climate. Now, shocking [evidence](#) shows they were denying, dismissing, and downplaying the risk of burning fossil fuels during really early attempts to crack down on sources of pollution. At the same time, they spent millions to boost their public image as a responsible partner in the search for climate or clean air solutions. This is a carbon copy - pun intended - of exactly what the tobacco industry did when they knew their products caused cancers, and then used cultural sponsorship to deflect attention from failure to act on the damage they caused".

A spokesperson for *BP or not BP?* which has campaigned against BP sponsorship of the British Museum said,

"The British Museum's director, Nicholas Cullinan, is still trying to defend the museum's indefensible decision to accept BP's dirty money. In an interview with the Sunday Times he was asked ['will accepting it cause us reputational damage?'](#) and the answer is a resounding 'yes'. For over 10 years, we have joined with allies from

across the arts, the climate movement and with communities directly impacted by BP, in opposing this toxic partnership. By continuing its cosy relationship with BP, Cullinan and the Board of Trustees are choosing to collude with one of the planet's biggest fossil fuel villains and failing in their legal duty to protect the Museum's reputation".

**[ENDS]**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

### **About the Climate Choir Movement**

Founded in 2022, the growing Climate Choir Movement is comprised of 900 singers in 18 different choirs across the UK and in Zimbabwe. It uses musical performance to highlight the climate crisis.

<https://climatechoirmovement.org>

### **Media**

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### **Visuals**

Images and videos will be available here after 17:00 hrs 30<sup>th</sup> November:

<https://tinyurl.com/2u2ctnk7>

### **References**

- [1] [British Museum signs £50m funding deal with BP](#)
- [2] [7 reasons George Osborne should have no say on BP at the British Museum – Culture Unstained](#)
- [3] [2024 'virtually certain' to be world's warmest year on record - BBC News](#)
- [4] [Fires, floods and drought: Multiple extreme weather events unfold across the globe | ITV News](#)
- [5] [Extreme Heat Kills Hundreds of Thousands Worldwide Each Year | Scientific American](#)
- [6] [BP scales back climate targets as profits hit record - BBC News](#)
- [7] [Exclusive: BP abandons goal to cut oil output, resets strategy | Reuters](#)
- [8] [New Insights into the countries and companies behind Israel's fuel supply](#)
- [9] [ICJP - BP's oil supplies to Israel: fueling war crimes?](#)
- [10] [Israel awards gas exploration licences to BP and others](#)
- [11] [Revealed: How British Museum trustees wrestled with ethical and security implications of £50m BP deal](#)
- [12] [Tate director Maria Balshaw criticises British Museum's sponsorship deal with BP](#)
- [13] [Revealed: big oil told 70 years ago that fossil fuel emissions could impact civilization](#)
- [14] ['Will it cause reputational damage?': BM director discusses controversial BP donation](#)