

*Scientists for Global*

*Responsibility (SGR) is a membership organisation promoting responsible science and technology*

Dr Alice Bunn  
Institution of Mechanical Engineers  
One Birdcage Walk  
London  
SW1H 9JJ

14th March 2022

Dear Dr Bunn

As Responsible Science campaigner for Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR), I am writing to follow-up on our October 2019 report on *Irresponsible Science?: How the fossil fuel and arms industries finance professional engineering and science organisations*, which included an examination of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' record in these areas.<sup>1</sup> We have now created an update on the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' progress since the report, to which we draw your attention.<sup>2</sup>

Firstly, I would like to recognise the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' efforts to conserve energy, monitor energy consumption and reduce unnecessary travel.

However, as you will see in the update, we do retain concerns about the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' recent record as follows:

- continuing financial and other ties to fossil fuels and arms companies;
- the lack of readily available transparency regarding your investments in specific companies;
- relatively lax policies with respect to financial ties to fossil fuels and arms companies benchmarked against learned society peers;
- the lack of an environmental policy.

In view of these concerns, SGR calls on the Institution of Mechanical Engineers to:

1. increase your transparency by disclosing all payments from corporate sources worth over £1,000 for any sponsorship, partnership or advertising in your annual accounts, and by disclosing all the specific companies in which you hold investments of more than £5,000;

2(a). rapidly phase out your financial ties, including investments and advertising, from any and all companies whose carbon emission targets/ activities are not in line with the 2°C or less Paris Agreement goal - this currently includes all major companies in the coal, oil and gas sector;

<sup>1</sup><https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/irresponsible-science>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/IMechE\\_progress\\_report.pdf](https://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/IMechE_progress_report.pdf)

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Part of the campaign awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017

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2(b). as a first step on the route to implementing action '2(a)', make no new investments in the coal, oil and gas sectors;

3. direct your fund manager to be guided by fossil fuel free indexes (including from FTSE and MSCI) and schemes such as the Transition Pathway Initiative<sup>3</sup> to invest only in firms whose ambitions are currently on track for global warming of 2°C or less, rather than the less stringent criterion of being in line with current government commitments, which are not sufficient to protect the world from 'dangerous' climate change;

4. redirect your investments to industries/ organisations that mitigate climate change and promote planetary health, such as energy conservation, renewable energy and energy storage;

5. estimate and report on the carbon footprint of your investment portfolio using tools such as the Montreal Pledge website<sup>4</sup>;

6. eliminate any financial links to corporations that have received significant penalties in the last five years related to law-breaking or major malpractice or are likely to in the near future;

7. in line with the recommendations of the ShareAction report on investment managers<sup>5</sup>, strengthen the due diligence of your asset manager selection by reviewing their performance in the areas of climate-related voting and engagement, climate-related policy commitments and accounting for impacts of investments, and be aware that signing up to supportive initiatives such as the PRI or Climate Action 100+ does not always correspond with having a fit-for-purpose responsible investment approach;

8. join the Energy Institute and Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) in signing the Pledge to Net Zero<sup>6</sup>;

9(a). rapidly phase out your financial ties, including any investments, sponsorship for events and school education programmes, and advertising, from all companies that are part of the arms/ military technology industry<sup>7</sup>, to ensure that your actions are in line with your Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup>;

9(b). as a first step on the route to implementing action '9(a)', make no new investments in and accept no new sponsorship from companies that are part of the arms/ military technology industry;

10. join the Energy Institute, IOM3, Royal Meteorological Society, EngineeringUK, IET, Engineering New Zealand and Engineers Australia in signing or supporting the Professional Bodies Climate Action Charter<sup>8</sup>;

11. agree and make publicly available environmental policies that aim to minimize the impacts of both your organization itself and your professional members.

Considering the practical implementation of these actions, we think the Institute of Mechanical Engineers could complete actions 1, 2(b), 3, 5-7, 9(b), and 10 during this year, with the other actions to be completed by the end of next year.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.transitionpathwayinitiative.org/>

<sup>4</sup><https://montrealpledge.org/>

<sup>5</sup><https://shareaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ShareAction-Climate-Report-III-Final.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.pledgetonetzero.org/>

<sup>7</sup> We have provided a definition of what constitutes an arms company in section 3.3 of our report, *Irresponsible Science?* <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/irresponsible-science>

<sup>8</sup> <https://professionalsclimatecharter.org/signatories/>

Of your professional society “colleagues”, the British Psychological Society, Royal College of Physicians, British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Faculty of Public Health, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health have all now fully divested from fossil fuels, are in the process of doing so, or have committed to do so. The British Medical Association took the lead, beginning its journey back in 2014. All these organisations also exclude investment in arms companies.

Some other professional bodies examined in the *Irresponsible Science?* report have tightened up their policies on fossil fuels and arms since publication of the report. For example, the Geological Society has introduced investment policies that exclude arms and the most carbon-emitting fossil fuels – thermal coal and tar sands – and is going further than this by not currently investing in any form of fossil fuel, whilst the Royal Meteorological Society has excluded investment in fossil fuels and arms, and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining has ceased to invest in arms and the most carbon-emitting fossil fuels.

You may also be interested in SGR's new Science Oath for the Climate<sup>9</sup>, where scientists, engineers and academics commit to holding their professional associations, institutions and employers to these same standards on climate change as they've committed to themselves.

We believe the shift in wider expectations about good climate governance means that the reputational sensitivity of the issue has only risen since the publication of the *Irresponsible Science* report, especially given the UK's hosting of COP26 this year and the resulting international attention on UK carbon emissions, goals and institutions as well as the recent ruling by a Dutch court that Shell must reduce its carbon emissions<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, the continued controversy over UK arms exports which contribute to breaches of international humanitarian law (such as those to Saudi Arabia) and the statement by the UN Secretary General's office that the UK government decision in March to increase the size of the nation's nuclear warhead stockpile by 44% is a breach of Article VI of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty<sup>11</sup> is also likely to have strengthened public opposition to financial ties to arms companies and those involved in the nuclear weapons sector.

I look forward to hearing your response. If you reply within two weeks we will take your reply into account as part of our media work around this and similar letters that we have written to a selection of professional scientific and engineering organizations. All the letters and accompanying reports will be made public as part of this media work.

Thank you and best wishes

Dr Liz Kalaugher  
Responsible Science Campaigner

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sgr.org.uk/projects/science-oath-climate-text-and-signing>

<sup>10</sup> <https://theconversation.com/shell-ordered-to-cut-its-emissions-why-this-ruling-could-affect-almost-any-major-company-in-the-world-161754> <sup>11</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-uk-nuclear-weapons-international-law-b1817827.html>