



Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Pierhead Street  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Our Ref: ST/WJ/1787

14<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Re: Inquiry into non-public funding of the arts**

Dear Sirs,

**1. About Valero**

1.1. Valero Energy Ltd owns and operates Pembroke Refinery in south west Wales, as well as six terminals across the UK, and the Mainline Pipeline which links Pembroke with the Manchester and Kingsbury terminals. Valero markets fuel in the UK and Ireland under the Texaco brand, with around 850 independently owned and operated Texaco-branded service stations in the UK. In total, Valero employs approximately 800 people in the UK and supports several thousand other jobs at the refinery, terminals and service stations.

1.2. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's inquiry into non-public funding of the arts, ahead of the oral evidence session on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Valero is committed to taking a leadership role in the communities in which we live and work, including our long-standing community engagement programme that supports a range of charitable and community initiatives, including culture and the arts.

**2. Valero's support for the arts in Wales**

2.1. Alongside other key areas of community support – such as education, sport, the environment and civic initiatives – Pembroke Refinery has a well-established record of supporting the arts in Wales ever since the refinery was built in 1964. During that time the refinery has developed a reputation for establishing positive and mutually beneficial relationships with arts and culture organisations across the communities where we operate.

2.2. Valero's community engagement programme supports a broad range of arts activities and disciplines, from the visual arts and music to literature and drama, and from traditional and classical to contemporary art. Decisions on community engagement sponsorships in Wales, including for the arts, are made at the local level by the refinery's Policy, Government & Public Affairs Department, in consultation with wider refinery leadership and input from Valero's corporate HQ in San Antonio, Texas.



2.3. In order to demonstrate best practice in corporate social responsibility, as well as to address a number of social and cultural issues important to our communities, Valero has undertaken to develop a number of sponsorships that accomplish a series of strategic objectives for Valero.

2.4. A selection of these key strategic relationships between Valero and arts organisations in Wales include:

- **Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama** – Valero has partnered with the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD), the National Conservatoire for Wales, to create the West Wales Young Actors Studio, which was established at Pembrokeshire College three years ago. The Young Actors Studio has provided young people from West Wales with the opportunity to develop the skills they need to enter the UK's top drama schools. The quality of education is world leading and the funding enables RWCMD tutors to deliver drama workshops in local schools, colleges and youth centres and provides financial assistance to ensure talented young people from the area can benefit from expert training. Five Pembrokeshire students have won places at prestigious schools where only one in over a thousand are chosen.
- **VC Gallery** – The VC (Veterans and the Community) Gallery is a charitable arts organisation committed to working with any individual that has served in HM Armed Forces for any duration, as well as other vulnerable groups in the community, such as individuals with mental health difficulties, welfare issues and people that are socially excluded. The VC Gallery engages these individuals through the arts, creating a mutually safe place for individuals and groups to express themselves creatively, learn new skills, build self-esteem, work towards responsibilities and develop relationships. Valero provides core funding to the VC Gallery supporting art workshops that had a contact rate of approximately 1,500 people in 2016.
- **Côr Meibion De Cymru** – Pembroke Refinery's support for the South Wales Male Choir began in 1987 when the refinery supported the choir's first annual concert in St David's Hall, Cardiff. The refinery has continued this sponsorship ever since, with performances across Wales and around the globe each year, including an annual performance in St Davids Cathedral, Pembrokeshire. Valero's support for Côr Meibion De Cymru ensures that one of Wales' premier cultural gifts to the world – male voice choirs – are able to endure for the benefit of audiences across Wales and further afield.
- **Pembrokeshire Music Service** – The refinery has over 10 years support for Pembrokeshire County Council's Music Service providing peripatetic education to children across all local authority primary and secondary schools in Pembrokeshire. This includes the annual Valero Primary School Music Festival and Valero Secondary School Music Festival, both of which are staged at Sir Thomas Picton School, Haverfordwest.



- **Arts & Business Cymru** – Pembroke Refinery has been principal sponsor of Arts & Business Cymru's prestigious annual awards since 2010. These awards recognise the rich and exciting partnerships between the private sector and arts organisations, facilitated by Arts & Business Cymru, who play a vital role in supporting the strong cooperation and mutually beneficial links which benefit all sections of the community.
- **Artes Mundi** – Artes Mundi is the largest contemporary art prize in the UK and among the world's most significant arts events, that aims to present a landmark programme of international visual art that will enrich the cultural and educational life of Wales and its people, develop and inspire new audiences and build cultural bridges between Wales and the wider world. Valero provided corporate sponsorship for the seventh Artes Mundi Prize held in January 2017 in Cardiff for the first time and is keen to establish ourselves as a key partner for future Artes Mundi prizes.

2.5. In addition to establishing these key strategic relationships with arts and culture organisations in Wales, Valero also supports a broad range of typically smaller sponsorships for the arts on an *ad hoc* basis from the refinery's community engagement programme. These sponsorships are made on a reactive basis following submissions of requests to the refinery's Policy, Government & Public Affairs Department.

2.6. This includes long-standing annual support for organisations such as Tenby Museum & Art Gallery, Milford Haven Music Festival, Tenby Arts Festival and Tenby Blues Festival as well as newer initiatives such as the Llangwm Literary Festival, one of Wales' newest literary events bringing a range of world-class writers to audiences in West Wales. Valero sponsorship is also often leveraged to support distinct creative output locally that might otherwise have been difficult or impossible to produce. An example of this is Pembroke Refinery's sponsorship of local mixed choir the Landsker Singers, and their recently concluded trilogy of concerts of an entirely original composition, *Great is the Story*, performed in St Davids Cathedral.

### 3. The role of private sector investment in the Welsh arts

3.1. Valero believes that the private sector has an important role to play in supporting the arts and cultural initiatives, with great potential existing for many mutually beneficial outcomes for both business and arts partners from these relationships. For business there are many benefits, including promoting brand awareness, engaging employees in company philanthropic efforts and developing corporate social responsibility. For arts organisations the benefits include financial and in-kind support that allows cultural initiatives that might otherwise not have occurred to take place.

3.2. Valero's support for the arts in Wales is primarily an opportunity for us to demonstrate our company values to our communities and other key stakeholders, whilst achieving a range of social outcomes to improve the lives of others in the areas where we live and



work. Valero Pembroke Refinery fundamentally believes that we have a responsibility to give back to our communities, and arts and culture activities are one of the most important ways that we can achieve that.

3.3. The criteria we use when considering what arts and cultural activities we engage with at Pembroke Refinery is whether the project is seen to improve the quality of life of the communities in which we operate and whether it provides people – particularly young people – with an opportunity to achieve their full potential where otherwise they would not have been able to. Therefore, when agreeing to arts investment in Wales, Valero places a premium on whether the proposed initiative not only achieves excellence in aesthetic creativity but also whether it can be used as a vehicle to address issues affecting sections of our community.

3.4. This includes addressing the needs of those affected by social exclusion, 'hard to reach' communities, mental and physical health needs, educational opportunities, disadvantaged children and families as well as socio-economic enrichment.

3.5. Valero's efforts and objectives in supporting the arts in Wales have been recognised as supplementing public efforts to spread the benefits of arts and culture to audiences and communities across Wales. For example, Valero's involvement with the RWCMD West Wales Young Actors Studio has received praise from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, who wrote in a letter dated 2 December 2016 that the initiative "is very much in keeping with the Government's work to tackle poverty, raise educational aspirations and attainment and to improve social mobility and equality of opportunity."

3.6. Valero recognises that private sector support for the arts, whether in Wales or elsewhere, cannot replace the important role of public subsidy in maintaining and advancing cultural heritage across national and local communities. Private sector support for the arts is often tied to particular corporate objectives and values. However, we nonetheless believe that companies such as Valero have an important part to play in supplementing public funding efforts for arts and culture initiatives and we encourage other businesses to embrace the mutually beneficial opportunities that come from financial and in-kind support for the arts in Wales.

## 4. Conclusion

4.1. Valero is committed to the communities in which we live and work, and is proud of its record in promoting the efforts of arts organisations in Pembrokeshire and other parts of Wales to spread the social benefits of the arts to individuals, groups and audiences. Non-public funding of the arts has a vital role in supporting the arts in Wales and we will continue to build on the over-50 years of community sponsorship for the arts at Pembroke Refinery.

4.2. Once again, Valero is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry, and should any further information be required we would be delighted to assist the committee in its efforts. We particularly look forward to discussing these issues in greater detail during the oral evidence session on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017.



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Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Thornton', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Thornton  
Refinery Public Affairs Manager