Title	*Panel discussion: What next for climate change reporting?*
Description	A panel discussion bringing together several of the UK's most influential environment correspondents to discuss the challenges of climate change reporting in the coming months The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ), the School of Geography and Environment and the Environmental Change Institute (ECI) at Oxford University, and the British Council Climate Change Programme are bringing together several of the UK's most influential environment correspondents to discuss the challenges of climate change reporting in the coming months - David Adam, The Guardian, Environment Correspondent - Richard Black, BBC News website, Environment Correspondent - Fiona Harvey, Financial Times, Environment Correspondent - Ben Jackson, The Sun, Environment Correspondent - Chair, Fiona Fox, Director, Science Media Centre Among the key issues to be addressed are, - In the light of the weak political agreement reached in Copenhagen, will the science of climate change be obscured in 2010 by reporting the international diplomacy. How should the media keep the science at the forefront of the coverage. - What are the key issues that the media should report on the row over the hacked e-mails from the University of East Anglia (Climategate). - Surveys suggest that the public in the UK seems to be becoming more sceptical about the science of climate change: should the media give more voice to sceptics or ramp up the voice of scientists. - Polar bears, melting ice, floods in Bangladesh have come to frame media representations of climate change. What's new and fresh to keep the public's interest. Is fear-based messaging a turn-off. And if so what is the alternative. - Is new media engagement with climate change fundamentally altering the future of environmental reporting. What is the role of the traditional print media - Are some media in danger of becoming too much like campaigning organisations (for example, the Guardian's 1010 campaign). Does that undermine their credibility If media become too close to some NGOs, how does this affect their role as independent commentators
Presenter(s)	Chaired by Fiona Fox and Science Media Centre
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Part of series	*Environmental Change Institute Podcasts from Oxford University*

James Painter My name is James Painter; I'm from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism here in Oxford. I just want to welcome everybody on behalf of all those organisations at the back. I'm not going to read them out but it's a great pleasure to have you all here.

Just by way of introduction, what's the backdrop to this event? Many of you may not know that for several years the Reuters Institute and the School of Geography/ECI have organised a series

of really interesting and productive workshops, whereby we get a whole lot of journalists from all around the world to come together and discuss with the budding scientists from the MSc course.

And the essential aim is to promote dialogue and better understanding between journalists and scientists, so that, at the very least, journalists understand a big more about complexity, risk and uncertainty and that scientists understand at least what the top line is. So we're trying to - in the spirit of those events - keep the same spirit of, sort of, thoughtful dialogue for this event as well.

And like all the previous events this event will be recorded, will be videoed and put on the website at the Reuters Institute and the ECI so that several scholars who are studying climate change in the media will have it as a reference point. And there's also many people who couldn't come will be able to have access to it.

We're very, very fortunate, as I'm sure you know, that we've got four of the UK's leading environmental scientists - correspondents, I should say, or analysts. I say UK because increasingly now they have very strong international voices because of their online presence.

I'm going to hand over to Fiona Fox, for those of you who don't know, is the director of the Science Media Centre. She's going to chair the event. Fiona blogs on the issues around climate change and media in a very appealing way, so if you don't know her blog you can get access at the Science Media Centre. And also, for those of you who don't know, the Science Media Centre have produced a very good report called *Securing the Future*, if I'm right, about the state of science reporting in the media, so Fiona, over to you.

Fiona Fox Okay, thanks James.

I'm really excited about chairing this debate. The Science Media Centre was set up after GM and BS and things that went wrong in the media, so the whole Climate Gate thing has been driving us to distraction since late last year. And I'm dying to interrogate our science and environment correspondents, so when James sent me an emailing saying "Would you chair this and ask questions to four prominent environment correspondents?" that answer was "Is the Pope a Catholic?"

(Laughter)

So I know that's very self-indulgent and I hope you enjoy yourselves as well, but I know I am going to enjoy myself.

So what I'm going to do is introduce the speakers and then the format of the evening is that I get to interrogate them for about half-an-hour - how exciting is that - and then, reluctantly, I come out to you for an hour and you can ask them anything you want to or, indeed, make short contributions. There's a lot of you here, so all I ask you to do is be brief, but nothing is ruled-out in terms of questions or contributions.

So let me just introduced our four speakers: Richard Black covers environmental issues for BBC News, primarily for the website, but also for national radio. Most of his career has been spent in BBC World Service reporting on scientific and environmental affairs and presenting programmes with a similar brief.

David Adam has been environment correspondent for the *Guardian* since 2005, before which he was science correspondent for two years; previously worked at the science journal, *Nature,* and tells of that he decided a career in journalism after a PhD in chemical engineering convinced him it was more fun to write about other people's research than to carry out his own.

(Laughter)

Fiona Harvey covers all the environmental issues for the *Financial Times*. She's twice won the Foreign Press Association Award for Best Environment Story, in 2005 and 2007, and was named Environment journalist of the year at the British Environment and Media Awards in 2007, so very much an award-winning journalist.

And Ben Jackson was appointed environment editor of the *Sun* a year ago, which we champion. How exciting is that? There's quite a bit of a myth around that science journalism is in decline and in fact the *Sun* felt that it was necessary to have a science and health person and a dedicated environment reporter, so we thought that was very exciting. Before that he was features editor at the paper.

Just one thing to say is that the speakers themselves - the journalists themselves - will tell you whether they're speaking to you in a personal capacity or as representatives of their paper, because I'm confused about which one's speaking as which, so they can explain that to you.

Right, let the interrogation begin. So the first question, it was prompted by something James Hansen, the leading NASA climate scientist, said in the last couple of days, where he accused the media of doing a great disservice to the public - not to science, to the public - in the way you've covered Climate Gate. Others too have blamed failing public support for climate change, as shown in recent polls, on the way the media have handled all this.

So the first question is about how you see your role - the media's role - in relation to public opinion on climate change. Is it your responsibility - and I use that word very carefully - your responsibility to ensure that the public think the right way on this? And privately, when you go to bed at night, does this responsibility for influencing public opinion weigh heavily on your shoulders.

David, do you want to kick us off?

(Laughter)

David Adam Five stools, five microphones: I feel a bit like Westlife, but I promise you I'll not sing.

(Laughter)

Wow, what a big question.

I think I would make two first points. The first: that you can't just generalise about the media in a way that you can't generalise about the scientists or black people. I think there is diversity within the media - there's certainly diversity within the *Guardian* - I wouldn't begin to speak on behalf of my newspaper. I think that there are different opinions within the *Guardian* on this issue and there are different opinions between newspapers on this issue and between different media outlets on this issue. So I think we should be careful about categorising or generalising about the media in general.

Now, in specifics, when it comes to me, do I feel a responsibility? Well, I suppose I feel a responsibility but I don't feel a responsibility to the public thinking the right thing on climate change, whatever that is. I think it's my responsibility to - I think as a journalist, what we have is access and I think we can ask questions and get answers that other people cannot. And I see it as my responsibility to ask those questions and to present the answers and to provide, I suppose, the evidence to allow people to hopefully make up their own minds on what they think the right decision is.

Now, again, just breaking that down a little bit, I think that there is a right decision when it comes to - it is just the times as the balance of scientific evidence shifts show that man-made climate change is a reality, I think that the answer to that is yes.

But there's a whole load of other questions based on that and about what policies should we bring in to try and deal with that, which I think are very open. And I think that for us to pretend there is a right way of thinking on how to deal with this problem is partly the reason why, I think, we get accused of shielding people from what they think of as the other side of the debate, because people confuse, I think, the reality of science with the suggestions of policy.

Fiona Fox Okay, thank you.

Richard?

Richard Black Well, to go back to the Westlife comparison, most of what I'm going to say is going to be in harmony with what David...

(Laughter)

Where he leads I'll follow, a minor tone below.

Most media organisations are commercial and, as such, they have one responsibility which is to their owner. An example of this: if you go back to the invasion of Iraq, the *Daily Mirror* started-off being opposed to that on principal and presumable wanting to inform people of the right point of view as they saw it. It wasn't popular, readership declined, they changed position. That is the reality facing most of the media.

The BBC is at a different situation but it's not actually that different because editors still want, you know, to have lots of people watching their programmes and listening to the programmes and reading web pages and so on. So we, to a certain extent, are also, sort of, forced down that avenue of seeking popularity, to a greater or lesser degree.

In terms of responsibility, again, I would agree with David. It's very difficult to pin down, on many issues that we cover, what the right way of thinking is. And I see part of my role as presenting things as they are in all their great diversity and their great complexity as much as possible and letting people make up their own minds. It's definitely not, I don't think, our role to sell at times and try and tell people how they should think about this.

And there are other examples, other issues that we cover that exemplify this particularly. I mean, I cover whaling quite a lot, for example, and a lot of people in this country have a very, very definite view of whaling, and yet you've got some other cultures and their view of whaling is completely the opposite. So you try and pin down what is the right way to think on whaling, you're absolutely wasting your time, I think; it's completely the wrong thing to do.

Fiona Fox Fiona?

Fiona Harvey As we're influencing public opinion I don't feel any responsibility at all towards public opinion. What I feel responsibility towards is my research and the facts, and my job is to present the facts to my readers as clearly and as objectively as possible. And we're very fortunate at the *FT* that that's what we're allowed to do, because people read us because they want to be well informed and some readers because they want to make investment decisions and so they need accuracy.

And so whatever we present to them has to be rock solid in terms of its accuracy and it also has to be as scrupulously fair as possible. So, unlike other papers, we don't do spin, or we try not to. You could argue that taking any kind of angle on a story is spin, but I think you can take that too far.

And when we present an argument we try to present all sides of an argument and when we present a problem we don't just present a problem; we don't just say, you know, climate change is really awful. Our readers are very 'can do' people; they're people who think of themselves as having a significant role in the world and an ability to change things. And so they want to be presented with possible solutions as well as problems, and so we're always very careful to do that.

To go back to what you said from James Hansen, in the reporting of Climate Gate, I think there has been irresponsible reporting, definitely. I think some people have said things that are badly researched, that aren't true, that are distorted, and I think that has been very poor.

Male Are you naming names?

Fiona Harvey No-one here.

(Laughter)

No-one here, don't worry. But I think that has happened and some people have taken this story as an opportunity to present a sceptic point of view. In some respects that's fair because part of this story is about the resurgence of climate change scepticism and you've got to report that, but at the same time I think you've got to be very careful in reporting what the mainstream scientific view is. So I feel a responsibility towards that.

Fiona Fox Okay.

Ben?

Ben Jackson I think it's a really interesting question for the *Sun*. 20 years ago, if the issue of climate change came up I think the *Sun* would've been - as a paper that is usually not short of an opinion - I think we would've decried it and said, straight away, you know, we would have been hard line sceptical and dismissed it out of hand and really railed against any government or scientist who put it forward as something that is, perhaps, you know, difficult to prove in a way that is very specific and difficult to come up with hard evidence that people can hold you down and show you.

20 years later we're probably in a position where we're probably more sure of ourselves in terms - as a title I think we're probably more interested in letting people have the benefit of the doubt, in terms of the way the science is heading, and seeing that our readers are, I think - it's our position to our readers that is interesting, I think. Because before, while we've possibly been railed against change sometimes, I think this time we're probably more interested in where this is going and seeing this as part of the future.

That said, in terms of what is the right way - 'what is the right way', it doesn't sit well with me or, I can see, any of these people here - my fellow panellists here - in terms of the meaning of that word. I think in many ways we channel both sides of the argument and we have to let those do the talking, especially in an area where our expertise in this isn't great enough to be completely authoritative, I think. You have to speak to the experts wherever you can.

So I think, while James Hensen probably disliked what the media said, I think you could say plenty of sceptics are most unhappy with what the media says as well. And if you're not being criticised, I think, then you're doing something wrong.

Fiona Fox Okay. Not too much responsibility taken there. Excellent answers - fascinating - but it's certainly not the media's fault if public support for climate change has fallen, according to our panel.

(Laughter)

Okay, another thing that you guys stand accused of is pretty specific, which is being slow to respond to UEA Gate and then Glacier Gate and all the gates. Is there any truth to that? Can you talk us through the kinds of discussion that went on in your newsroom about whether these stories should be covered at all, or what kind of prominence they should've been given and do you think you've called it right or wrong? This is the bit where we really get an insight into how this stuff...

And can I just say - because my own mobile phone has just gone off, which is outrageous - please turn your mobiles off.

(Laughter)

Richard Black Well I think we've, kind of, dodged the point a wee bit on this one, because the Climate Gate emails were released on, I think, November the 18th or 19th and on December the 1st I had a baby...

Fiona Fox What an excuse.

(Laughter)

Richard Black ...so I was on paternity leave for pretty much the whole of December which included the Copenhagen conference. That's what I call family planning.

(Laughter)

Richard Black To answer the question, I'll give you a personal insight what happened: I was at home, I was working at home, and I got a phone call that these emails had come out and that there was potentially a big story in there because the, kind of, sceptics were jumping up and down about a trick that was hiding the decline in temperatures. When they said it was East Anglia I knew it was this Phil Jones and the climate audit spat, which I've been aware of for a few years.

I wasn't working; I just said "Look, just be careful. This has been going on for a long time, there's a huge agenda here, a lot of this has been gone over time and time again; just be careful." And I don't think we did too much - I certainly don't think we were slow to react; I think we had something on the website within hours. And then there was some subsequent discussions the following week about had we done enough on it, what more should we do, because what they call the 'blogosphere' was jumping up and down about this, of course.

And there is a tendency to - one of the loneliest places in the media is when everyone else is doing a story and you're not. The only lonelier place is when you're doing a story and no-one else is.

(Laughter)

The word that was used was 'engage'. We had to engage with this story somehow, which I think is absolutely correct. It's a big story, it's out there; it's being discussed. You can't pretend this wasn't happening. And so we did quite a measured piece, I thought, just looking at what the impact of this might be and a breakdown of some of the emails and what my take on a few of them were.

Now I did stress to the news editor at the time, the danger in doing this was - however measured our coverage was - that it creates this illusion, to my mind, of a controversy. This, sort of, manufactured doubt which is what - when the climate sceptics were - I sort of characterise it as, I think, most of the bad people have gone out of the climate sceptic arena and I think we're left with mostly the mad people.

But certainly, you know, 10 years or so ago there was serious money behind this manufactured doubt issue which is, of course, as you know, just the idea that if people look like they're discussing an issue then there's something worthy of discussion which, in this case, was whether climate change was true, or not. And so I did say, you know, we just need to be aware of that, but I think we engaged with it.

And then I went off on paternity leave and then the *Guardian* put in - late January or early February - a whole string of articles about the emails, which again, I think, was driven by a desire to engage with the story; to look at this in a serious way. Well, I think I'm on the record by saying I think a lot of the coverage probably over-interpreted some of the issues and that was across the media. And most of the misinterpretation, I think, was on websites and in other newspapers, certainly a lot of the stuff about whether this should cast any doubt on science. I don't think the *Guardian* did that at all, to its enormous credit.

And I think that what drove the story then was the desire for it to be a story, almost. I think the collapse in - the ending of the Copenhagen talks in the way that they did almost created a vacuum, an need for stories on climate change and these emails came along at the perfect time. They hit a wave and they got coverage because of that.

Richard Black Thanks.

The whole Climate Gate thing, in a sense, whoever the stole the emails, in a sense they've already won their point because we're calling it Climate Gate. And the fact that we're using this title suggests that some sort of decision has been made at some sort of subconscious level in society that this is a serious issue.

I think, in fact, it presented - it was a very difficult story for media organisations to cover, this one, because you had to invest quite a lot of time and effort in actually going through all the email and all the documents if you were going to do it properly. And the time spent going through those emails and documents meant time that you couldn't spend on doing other things. And, of course, in the run-up to Copenhagen it was an exceptionally busy time. Now perhaps what we could've done was to take one person and say "Right, you sit down and you read through all the stuff, and that's your job for the next four days," but the reality is we're not resourced to do that and I don't think many organisations are.

The people that were pick on the draw and accusing organisations like our of being slow on the draw are the ones that didn't bother to read the stuff before spouting what they said, because it suited their political ends to do that. You know, again, it's not so much the manufacturing the appearance of doubt. In this case it's manufacturing the appearance of a cover up; the appearance of a scam. And they don't need to read through all the emails in order to do that; they just need to read, maybe, three, find one thing they don't like, put it out there with the label Climate Gate.

In retrospect, probably we should've done that, you know, looking back on it. Also looking back on the IPCC report back in 2007, possibly we should've taken one of our staff and said "Right, you sit down; read through the whole thing; check all the references." But I've discussed this with my editor and she was quite explicit, and I agree, that had we suggested that at the time we would've been laughed out of court: "What, you want to spend two weeks sitting on your arse, reading through this report? Why?" It's a waste of time. Go and cover other stories."

So were we slow to react? I don't think we were. We had the story up before any of the other mainstream media organisations. There were a few blogs that beat us to it, and we've since followed it up time and time again.

But part of the attack on climate science, certainly with the BBC, is mirrored by the way the BBC is attacked: there is an interest in saying that we're slow; there's an interesting in saying we're not covering these things because then it promotes this kind of vision, I suppose, this image that we're somehow biased and we're somehow following an agenda. We are pawns. Media organisations are pawns in this big political game just as much as scientists are.

On the Himalaya Gate we actually had a story up on that on the 5th of December coming out of our daily bureau and yet we're still being accused of not having covered the story, which is extraordinarily weird and is perhaps down to the fact that another newspaper claimed to have broken this story when they did this in January, sort of, six weeks after we did. And, of course, we didn't follow it up because we'd already done it.

Fiona Harvey I'm just going to take the emails first: when we got the story about the emails that had been put up on online, I talked to my editors about it and they decided that we didn't have time before our deadlines to actually check out whether these emails were true and so on. So we didn't cover it immediately because if we cover something it gives it authority and so we have to make sure that it's absolutely, as I said, cast iron. So we didn't cover it immediately and once we had checked it out and saw - we covered it a few days later.

On the Himalayan glacier stuff and all the IPCC things that followed, I'm just going to tell you a story that illustrates what utterly horrible places newspapers are, because this news about being slow to respond, that was something my editor said in an email to the whole of *FT*, saying that we had been slow to respond to the Glacier Gate story and that email was actually republished in the *Guardian*. Thanks, David.

(Laughter)

And it was one of those occasions when I just wanted to stab myself in the eye, because what had happened was that when that story broke, and it was on the *New Scientist* website, I spoke to our editors - our world desk editors - and I said, you know, this was happening. And they said "We did

so many climate change stories in Copenhagen, we've got no room for this now," so they ignored it. And then I said, you know "We should try and do something on it, you know, it got picked up in other papers and so on." And they said "Write a story if you like."

So I wrote a story for the Web and what happens is when things go on the website the stories that have been in the paper get prominence and the stories that have not been in the paper get lost and no-one sees them. And this one didn't even go up for two days because - I don't know - because that's the kind of bloody, bloody thing that happens all the time.

(Laughter)

Then I got a call on a Sunday saying that the editor had been complaining in confidence that we didn't have any stories on this glacier `[[ 0:28:02]]` and everyone else had it. So I said "Fine, I will spend my Sunday writing a story on this, that's fine." I wrote it, when it appeared in the paper it had been so messed around with and macerated that it wasn't a story about the glaciers and everything anymore, it was a story about something completely different with a paragraph about glaciers at the end.

So the next day, the editor said "Why don't we have anything on this story?" And I said "I've been trying."

(Laughter)

And what happens is this - I don't expect the editor to do anything because he's far too grand. So he goes into a conference with all of his editors there for each desk and I bet - I'm pretty damn sure that when the editor sits at the top of table and says "Why didn't we have this?" I bet there's none of those editors in that room put their hand up and said "Well, Fiona Harvey offered us a story, sir, but we declined." I've really got the feeling that didn't...

(Laughter)

So it gets really, really frustrating and, I mean, why, because newspapers are dysfunctional. They are, they can never be anything other than that because it's the nature of what they do. And so this business about being slow to respond, yes, it happens and it just makes you want to cry.

(Laughter)

Fiona Fox To think I was worried that they wouldn't say what they thought.

(Laughter)

Beautiful, beautiful.

Ben, how long do you and your colleagues spend discussing Climate Gate and where it should be in the *Sun*?

Ben Jackson Well, we at least know that the *Sun* isn't quite as Pythonesque as the *FT*.

(Laughter)

On the Climate Gate we had a story in the paper on the 21st. I think the story broke, possibly, on the 20th and we were pretty much the day after. The weekend's papers were, as I recall, both quite late and really - and Richard and David and Fiona have answered it pretty well really - this is the story that wouldn't die.

We were looking the other way; we were all looking at Copenhagen and thinking "This is the moment the world's going to change, because we've been running up this hill all year." And suddenly these emails came from the other direction and I think, you know, people were caught napping a little, partly because of the volume of emails that were there; partly because they were facing, what they thought, was something far more important anyway and also, as Richard says, because to actually go through it in any detail - and let me make clear: the *Sun* wasn't about to do this - to go through it in any detail you do need to throw a big team of people at it and a big

team of people with the expertise and knowledge to go through these emails and understand the language that they're talking about.

The fact is that it was a story that kept reappearing throughout December. When we were in Copenhagen I remember every conference started with "What are you going to say about Climate Gate emails, Mr Pachauri? What are you going to say about -" They were worried in the first three days of Copenhagen that every press conference was going to be overshadowed by these emails, so people were asking about them. They just simply weren't going through the text of all the emails themselves.

But I do think there was one thing about the emails that slightly disturbed me and that was - I think Fiona might have been there as well - the press conference about three or four days after with Lord Stern and it was about the economics of climate change and how much it was going to cost over the next 100 years and it was a very interesting, worthy press conference. But at the beginning of the question and answer session, somebody stood up and said "We don't want any questions about the UEA emails, please, from anyone." And all our jaws dropped. How can you not face-up to a question on something that is so fundamental?

And in the end, because a few of the climate journalists have the sort of rebellious streak that you see in Fiona, that's all the questions were and they ended up just having to answer. But I thought it was a strange tact to say "Well, you can't ask a question." Well, I think that's slightly indicative of how the climate `[[log 0:32:43]]` has responded at the moment. Initially is "No, we're bigger than this. You can't question us." And I really think, you know, looking back, we need to ask questions and we need to be able to face those questions head on.

Fiona Fox Okay.

I'm running out of time for my bit, which I think is tragic. So I'm going to ask - I've got about eight more questions. I'm going to ask two more and I'm going to ask them together and you don't have to answer both them. Is that good? And then I promise I'm coming out to you.

Just on sceptics, David's already been rude about them: the bad ones have disappeared, the mad ones are what remain. I mean, where does this leave us in terms of sceptics? People like John Beddington, the Chief Scientific Advisor, and Mike Hulme from UEA have, kind of, come and said that we've probably been too hard on sceptics in the past and a censorious approach to certain sceptics in the media may have contributed to some of the backlash we're now seeing.

So what do you reckon about - are we going to see more; are they here to say - even the mad ones, are they going to get the limelight; are you still going to fight - Richard, like I know you have done for some years - that we don't have this scenario where every time a scientist has spent 10 years on a scientific study and wants to promote that on the BBC they have to be met with `[[?? 0:33:57]]`. Where are we with sceptics; where do you think it's going?

And then my second question absolutely leads on from Ben's final point there and I think is very relevant for this audience: what do you think the scientists should be doing differently; what should they have been doing differently in the last few months and what should they do differently in the next few years?

I think some of you who've read my blog may know that I was actually a bit upset that the scientists who braved the media in the middle of the frenzy and spoke at the SMC briefing, we're attacked for - shock, horror - sticking to the science in the Science Media Centre. That's kind of what you're saying, Ben.

We certainly - you would never hear the SMC say "No questions allowed about anything," but actually they didn't answer their Webster's question about whether Pachauri should resign, they refused to answer specific question about UEA emails and there was - almost every journalist, including David and Tom filled in for - as they left, they all said to me "Fiona, I think you're really

naive. The scientists have got to go further than the science now to win the argument with the public."

So a panel of scientists who basically told us what we definitely know - what we've known for hundreds of years about climate change - and what we don't yet know for certain: what's more immature, what's not - the science isn't in yet, were basically criticised for that. I think, as somebody said - I think it was Mike McCarthy - "Based on that performance they're not going to win the public debate." And quite a lot of you guys think that, that it's your responsibility. It's not there's - note - as they all said in the beginning to keep the polls high, but scientists.

So two final questions and then I shut up. Who wants to deal with them? And you don't have to deal with them?

Ben Jackson I can do that fairly briefly.

Sceptics: to me it's not the mad people - it's not the mad people who are the sceptics. It's the people. You know, it's the taxi driver, it's your neighbour...

Female They're mad. Taxi drivers are mad.

Ben Jackson A lot of *Sun* readers are taxi drivers. No, I think if you go out into the world and ask people what do they think of climate change then you're not talking to the Christopher Booker's or Lord Monckton's or all the others; you are talking to people who want to be persuaded or have yet to be persuaded, or that think it's a Government conspiracy.

And the people of Britain, the people of the world aren't stupid and, you know, I mean, it's a shame but it's a fact that temperatures in the US went down last year. You know, they actually went down; it didn't warm. So people's evidence of their own eyes and ears, they thought, well, you know "Where is this climate change?" And when you're faced with a frozen Britain for a couple of months and then what you've been told about global warming: is it true or is it not true?

It just seems that people make those judgements based on the things around them; they're not talking to the scientists that we have the privilege of talking to every day and sometimes even those scientists - and we've seen this in recent months - they have moments where they get things wrong. So I think the sceptics we need to worry about is - or not worry about - or take into account, the scepticism is what we need to take into account, not the sceptics.

And we need to take into account, when we're writing, that sometimes when you say 'climate change' people won't believe that it's happening. And therefore you have to represent the people on the other side of the argument or actually detail where this information's come from much more than we did last year.

I think all of us, probably, were on a little rollercoaster of hype last year where every press release came through "Climate change, this is happening, that's happening," as if we all know it and it's all a fact, you know? Well, let's justify that. And maybe that's a good thing that we have to go and justify every fact as it happens. So that's my thought on sceptics.

And the following point was - oh, on sceptics too, Jeremy Clarkson just, basically, writes for the *Sun*, you know, people want him to be Prime Minister of the UK. He speaks with a very common sense matter-of-fact view. Sure, he represents the car industry but a lot of people listen and I know eventually Jeremy will round, but we have to take into account public opinion on that.

So what was the second point?

Fiona Fox It was about scientists; it was your last point about scientists. What should these guys be doing?

Ben Jackson I think in terms of the reaction of scientists, I think it's very difficult how you put yourself out front. Nobody really wants to carry the whole weight of climate change on their back, so

sometimes, if there is an argument, scientists maybe duck the question or they think that's for someone else to answer. And I think, sometimes that's a difficult thing for journalists to understand because we want to ask the questions that get under the skin and say "Well, what do you think? What do you know?" and sometimes that's, maybe, why they duck it.

Fiona Fox Fi?

Fiona Hervey? Just on the scientists and what scientists should do: first of all, scientists reacted disastrously to the emails when they first came out. On the train to Copenhagen we had a debate. We had the vice chair of the IPCC there, and some other people, and the head of the UN Environment Programme, Achim Steiner. And again, it was established [[?? 0:39:46]], because when they were asked about their emails what they said was "Those emails were stolen," you know "Those emails were stolen."

And it's, like, no-one cares if they're stolen, you know? The authenticity was not in doubt by that stage, people knew they were real. And if you just stand there and your first line of defence is "The emails were stolen," that makes it look like you haven't got a better argument.

Male The politicians expenses were stolen as well and nobody...

Fiona Harvey Exactly. Who cares? Get over that. That's not a defence and the fact that they used it as a defence made it seem like they had nothing better to say which was just disastrous.

On other reactions from the scientists at that SMC briefing, I felt a great deal of sympathy for the scientists there, because they were clearly saying "We're here [[?? 0:40:34]] science, we can't say Pachauri should resign and we can't say, you know, whether Phil Jones acted badly because there's an investigation going on and so on." They said very clearly "We can't say that," and they got - people - you know, some journalists seem to think that if you ask a question often enough and bully people long enough that they will turn around and say "Well yes, actually I can say Pachauri should resign."

No, no. People in that position, they're scientists - they're respectable scientists - they can't come out with things like that and it's not their business. Their business is to talk about science. Just accept that. So I really felt that the scientists there did a perfectly good job of talking about the science and they weren't able to talk about things that, you know, they can't talk about. What's unfair about that?

On the sceptics, I think you are going to see more stories on sceptics and you're going to see more opinion pieces and things like that from sceptics. What's happened is that a lot of people think that they have now been given permission to be sceptical, to publicly doubt climate change. And the thing is that people think that being a sceptic is clever because, you know, people should be sceptical. Because, look, what is the opposite of sceptical - this is the key question - what's the opposite of sceptical? The opposite of sceptical is gullible. So if you're not a sceptic, you're climate gullible. That's the why people [[?? 0:42:09]].

So what you've got to do: the first thing I think you've got to do is reclaim the word sceptics.

Richard Black Yes, thanks. I'd agree with all that eminent good sense as usual from Miss Harvey. I don't find the level of scepticism surprising at all. This is something where the major impacts are projected not tomorrow, not next year, but emerging slowly and with variations over decades and not primarily in this part of the world. So I don't find it surprising that when there's a cold winter or whatever, people say "It can't be climate change."

It's not really something, I don't think, which is a function of how climate change is communicated. It's a function of basic human nature, how well or how poorly science is understood, how well or poorly people get the nuances of things that scientists are saying. You know, I mean, you don't often get reduced to this simple question "Is climate change happening?" Well, I mean, in a

sense it's a meaningless and the meaningful questions are far more nuance, far more complex and far more numerous than that. But that's what it often gets reduced to.

And until those - you could make an argument that until such a time as this country and others produce school leavers at 18, by the drove, who are fully versed in getting to grips with this kind of complexity - who are better at language than they are, who are better at science than they are, who are better at maths than they are - then it's actually, pretty much, a vain hope to expect the, sort of, full power plea of the climate science message to be taken onboard. So that would be my first point: I don't think it's surprising.

In the opinion poll that the BBC took part in a few weeks ago there was actually a crumb of comfort there for scientists. I know David's written about this. I have as well. Yes, the level of overall scepticism had increased. When they asked - they took a subset of respondents who said they had been aware of stories like Glacier Gate. I think it was about half the respondents had been aware of these things.

Now, in that subgroup, they had actually become less critical of climate science during that period, i.e. the kind of assumption that Climate Gate, Glacier Gate, etc would automatically reduce trust among people who read about it was not borne out in that opinion poll. And why that is, I don't know. Is it a real affect? I mean, the numbers in the poll were pretty small. But nevertheless that - I think, if you can pick up anything from that it possibly is that communicating this stuff is not necessarily a bad thing.

Now, scientists are in a bit of a vice here because when you like at climate scientists who have gone further than the science, who've tried to speak in everyday language, they get pilloried and vilified for doing so, for putting over what they - you know, what is perceived in some quarters as an alarmist message that it's not their job "It's your job to do science." That's a criticism you get at that point. So I'm not quite sure, you know, how you win and it must be - you know, climate scientists must look at astrophysicists and think well, I'd love to work in such a politically uncontroversial role as that. But I think good communication is the key.

I was quite pleasantly surprised, in a way - not really surprised, but *Nature Geoscience,* at the weekend, had this piece about hurricanes and climate change where they basically tried to produce a, kind of, distillation of the science, if you like, a mini IPCC, but just on hurricanes and there may be something in that that scientists can do. Getting together and producing reports on key issues which are fairly simple to read - certainly simpler than *Nature Geoscience* - but would, sort of, bring together the, kind of, latest knowledge and which cross the board.

Because that particular report had on it, among its authorship, Kerry Emanuel who's often accused of being alarmist on this issue, and Chris Landsea who resigned from the IPCC working groups because he thought the IPCC was being too alarmist. So they've, sort of, crossed the genuine scientific divide there and brought them all together. So it's something that everyone can embrace.

Fiona Fox Richard, can I speed you up? Sorry.

Richard Black Yes, of course, sorry.

One more point: I mean, the decision at the IPCC level may be taken out of its own hands by this review that the UN has announced that the UNEP Governing Council today in Bali - I don't know if you're aware of this - but they've decided that there will be a review into how the IPCC works and what its conclusions are. We can expect that to emerge during this year. But yes, the sceptics and scepticism, very much here to stay.

Fiona Fox Can you be fairly brief? Sorry.

David Adam I'll be really quick.

Just to clarify about climate sceptics: when I use the term climate sceptics, I mean someone very specific. I don't think a taxi driver saying "Bloody hell, it's freezing, isn't it?" is a climate sceptic. I don't think someone who doesn't want to pay £1,000 a year for their electricity bill, I wouldn't say is a climate sceptic. I think a climate sceptic is someone who knows better and then takes a perverse objection to the science for pathological motives and it's very specific. I think that...

(Laughter)

I've just insulted them again, haven't I?

(Laughter)

On the second point, I think that it's incredibly naive of the Science Media Centre to organise a briefing with climate scientists, in the middle of the greatest debate about the ethics of the behaviour of climate scientists we've ever had, and then not to get them to answer questions on the behaviour of scientists. That's what this is about on a meaningful level.

Many of the journalists in the room believed that the science of climate change had been undermined by these emails. They were concerned about the way [[?? 0:48:08]] was working, when the scientists should've been more open with their critics, should they have responded to freedom of information requests, and to say that scientists only talk about the science is just not true. If you ask - one of the people at the briefing was Julia Slingo, head of the MET Office. You ask her about the MET Office, if it should have more funding for super-computers. She won't say "I'm not talking about that, that's policy. I'm only talking about the science."

Fiona Fox Oh, I so want to come back, but I can't.

(Laughter)

Okay, over to you. I've heard enough of them now for a while and I know there's lots of important scientists and interested people in this room, so over to you. You can ask questions, you can make short contributions as long as it's fairly brief. We want to know what you think. So hands, please.

Woman here, straight away.

Female 1 I want to ask about, I guess, all the people that...

Fiona Fox Sorry, can I stop you for a second? I'm going to take at least two or three people at a time, so please don't try and answer every single question, because we've only got half-an-hour.

Sorry.

Female 1 Okay - about regulation of bad science journalism. So, for example, the headline story on the BBC Science & Nature page today and the catch-line of that story says that whales are the forest of the ocean, which is empirically wrong.

Richard Black Sorry, which...

Female 1 The BBC Science page.

Fiona Fox Okay and any others?

Male 1 I'm [[?? 49:36]] from the Science Media Centre. This is not a planted question. I just want to ask the panel whether they think that anything good will come out the other side of this; will we be better off, in the end, having gone through this climate [[?? 49:49]]?

Fiona Fox Gentleman at the back there.

Male 2 [[?? 49:56]]. I'd like to make two, sort of, short statements and then ask a question. I'm rather disturbed by the language that's been used in the course of this debate. Scepticism is a legitimate and reasonable activity. Climate change denial, and I think that there is still - contrary to what is being said - a combination of mad and bad at the denial end and they're being extraordinarily successful. Their actually much better than we are at getting their messages across.

I'd like to reclaim legitimacy for the role of the sceptic, in true terms, and I beg media people to use a different term for that.

And I think that - well, I've got quite a lot of potential things that have risen out - and similarly, I'm not keen on this notion of the use of this 'Gate' suffixed to all words because that has, by tradition, implies conspiracy. Now, there might be many things wrong with the processes that happened at UEA and within the IPCC, but I don't think that they're conspiracies of the same kind of order as the original Watergate.

Fiona Fox Okay, brilliant. I can't let you have more - sorry.

Male 2 Sorry, can I just ask this very simple question...

Fiona Fox Quick question, yes, no probs.

Male 2 ...why haven't the media, instead of - you said theft is not a reasonable defence, but it's a very interesting question: who stole them and released them? And as far as I see that's never been investigated, together with the timing leading up to Copenhagen.

Fiona Fox Brilliant, thank you.

There was somebody just behind you, wasn't there? No? Was there a hand up there? No?

Gentleman here.

Male 3 Nobody - we've talked about the sceptics but we haven't talked about the blogosphere and I'd like to know what the panel things about how great its influence has been and whether it has been, in balance, a good thing or a bad thing.

Fiona Fox Okay, one more before I bring the panel back, the woman at the back.

Female 2 I'd like to ask the panel if they think the 24-hour news society has helped or hindered the accurate and responsible [[?? 0:52:28]] climate change?

David Adam Just very quickly, the guy at the back, I mean, you're absolutely right about the term sceptic and unfortunately it is just now a very, very well established name for that kind of person. And I think to pretend that it's not and to try and - well, to pretend that it's not is, obviously, not going to work. To try and reclaim scepticism, I think you're quite right, but we're actually having a debate in the *Guardian* at the moment: what do we call these people? Because it's not fair to call them - well, there are issues like calling them deniers, people have suggested we call them climate creationists or...

(Laughter)

...really, we're open to suggestions.

On the 'Gate' issue, again, I just think it is lazy and it's the way the media works, but do we report the world as it is or as we would want it to be?

Richard Black Yes, I'm afraid - I'm sure that Electrolux and Dyson don't like the word Hoover being used for all vacuum cleaners, but that's the way it is. And I've been through this, like David has, and unfortunately it's the least bad term that there is. And I often put it in inverted commas to

illustrate the fact that it's not what I'm entirely happy with, but there, basically, isn't anything else that encompasses that huge degree.

Regulation of bad science journalism: I don't know the story that you're talking about but journalism can't be regulated.

Female 1 Why not?

Richard Black Because it just can't be.

Female 1 You expect us to be regulated, as scientists we have...

Richard Black Do I?

Fiona Fox Okay, okay.

Richard Black It just - it simply can't be. You've got a number of commercial organisations who, basically, operate within laws of libel, slander - and that's about it actually - a few things like insider dealing that have caught newspapers out in the past but that's the way it is. And there is an argument that if you want a free and fair and independent press then you don't regulate them and you don't tell them what to think; that's the downside. You know, the one thing that you're complaining about is probably the downside of - what some people see anyway as very much the downside.

Fiona Fox You don't have to deal with more, Richard.

Richard Black Sure, no, there's a couple I want to.

Who stole the emails? We have tried to look at that and I know the *Independent* has as well. It's really difficult; it's really difficult. I've talked to computer experts and we just didn't get anywhere with that story.

24-hour news is undeniably bad for accuracy in all sorts of areas, not just climate change.

Blogosphere, probably bad, I think.

(Laughter)

Fiona Fox Can I just say: what about a descriptor in front of sceptic? Couldn't you have hardcore sceptics or scientific sceptics or would the subbie just pull that out?

Richard Black Sometimes. It depends on the context.

Fiona Fox Because it's the hardcore campaigning ones that are in a category of their own.

Richard Black I agree.

Fiona Harvey Yes, but you need a better word. It's like - we had a fabulous night editor who, you know, I made a mistake once of going out with a story and it had something about a prolife group in it. And he said "Prolife? We're all prolife. They're anti-abortion," you know, and that's what you've got to call them. Sadly I think, you know, with the ideas column that's likely to slip. The sceptics we're very, very clever in choosing their name. `[[?? 0:55:39]]` and denier won't work because that makes them sound like Holocaust `[[?? 0:55:41]]`.

With the gentleman on `[[?? 0:55:46]]` thing I think that has - definitely that has had a seriously bad effect on the ability - our ability to look into stories in-depth. You know, what I was saying earlier about how we paused before we published the email story, that's increasingly hard

to do because there's so much pressure to get things up on the web straight away and so on. So, I mean, I've got no answers for what we can do about that, I'm afraid.

Equally, I've got no answers on what we can do about the blogosphere. It is interesting how people's responses on the Internet - you know, people's responses to newspaper articles - it always astonishes me how vicious are people's responses of them. And I think, basically, on the Internet, because people are anonymous, they think that they can say anything and they can be completely outrageous and it's horrible really. Again, I don't know what we can do about that either.

Fiona Fox Can I just point out no-one has answered my colleague's question.

Ben, can you answer that about can we do this better; can anything good come out of all this bad stuff; can the media debate afterwards better than the media one before? You, in fact, talk about all the climate porn as IPCC...

Ben Jackson You know, I think what doesn't break you makes you stronger and, really, you have to be robust about these things. And if I can mention taxi drivers again, and I will, the other day he was talking to somebody who was sceptical about climate change and he was driving somewhere and he was talking about the medieval warming period. You know, I don't think six months ago there was that depth of knowledge in what's going on within the area of climate from the average person on the street.

And I think what's happened is we've all been through a process where every aspect of climate science has been tested - is being tested - and I think it's an important thing. I think we all have to think well, this is an important area, this is perhaps one of the biggest changes that we're all going to see in our lifetime; how convinced are we of the science in every aspect? And I think if you don't discuss that then it's a serious failure and if you don't rationalise that to yourself - because we can all accept science as handed down to us, but we also have to rationalise to ourselves. So I think, in this way, having this argument is a good thing. I think it helps; I think it helps all of us to move on.

And we've had a bit of a perfect storm in terms of the climate and all things environment. I've been doing this job a year and I'm just, sort of, noting down the things from the UEA emails; to the glaciers; to the terrible winter; to the Met Office not predicting it but making longer range predictions about, obviously, what's happening to our world; and then Toyota recalls the Prius and then - so you're just thinking if David Attenborough was caught in bed with `[[?? 0:58:59]]`...

(Laughter)

...it couldn't get any worse than that. So I'm just...

Fiona Fox Is that in tomorrow's paper?

I'm really keen to get back out to the floor so please - and we haven't got that much other, so if you want to make contributions, please do. I've got loads of hands now.

Tim?

Tim Palmer Tim Palmer, I'm a climate scientist.

Well, let me ask a question but let me preface it with a comment. I mean, you mentioned about cold winter and people - plenty of stories in Europe and the US about the cold winter, you know, and does that disprove climate change? Correct me if I'm wrong, but I've never seen a picture in a newspaper showing temperature anomalies right across the world. And the fact that across Greenland, across Hudson Bay, across Canada, across Africa, across much of the Tropics, cross much of the Southern Hemisphere, temperatures are positive. So we're seeing - we, sort of, you know, for some reason we're seeing cold anomalies where newspapers in mass happen to be printed.

(Laughter)

My question then is - and another related issue - maybe there's a cause of connection. Another related issue is about the Met Office forecast: any scientist knows that a short-range forecast, the skill of it has got really nothing to do with the predictions of long-term climate. So my question is: how do scientists, like myself and others in the room, get those messages stated clearly in a way that the public - I mean, we can write things online, blogospheres and all that stuff, but as the lady said, you know, that has a limited span. How do you get a headline in the *Guardian* or somewhere: *Scientists Fight Back: This is the Truth*. How do you do it?

Fiona Fox Right, there's a lot of hands there. Guy here and the woman behind and then I'm coming to you lot.

Alex Thomas Alex Thomas in the Earth Science department here.

Can I ask, I guess, an annoying question about the glacier offence, or whatever you want to call it now, I'm not calling it 'Gate'. When that came out as a story that was portrayed in a lot of the media as a failure of the science, but it was a mistake in Working Group Two of the IPCC report, which is a social science report, and Working Group One had a 30-odd page section on glaciers. And anyone who would have read the whole report surely would have noticed that this was a complete non-story and science is sound, and this is remarkable that there's only one mistake in, like, a 6,000-word, whatever it was - 6,000-page document.

So my question is: how many of the panel have actually read the IPCC report?

(Laughter)

Fiona Fox Good question. How do you test whether they're telling the truth or not?

Yes, guy here. Oh sorry, I'm coming back to you in a minute.

Male 4 What information or circumstance do the panel think will actually dissuade your average - your casual sceptic or denialist, whatever we're calling them.

Fiona Fox The taxi driver; what will dissuade the taxi driver?

Guy behind.

Andrew Steel I was a bit appalled by - Andrew Steel, physics student, by the way - I was a bit appalled by Richard Black's statement that there's this, sort of, false dichotomy between a regulated press and a fair press. You say that we're regulated by laws about libel and defamation and very little else. The fact is that the Earth and reality can't sue for libel when someone says that it's actually factually incorrect. And so is there surely not some kind of mechanism we can implement whereby newspapers that print stuff that's just crap, but doesn't actually offend anybody, can be held to account?

(Laughter)

Female 3 I'm from Friends of the Earth and one thing I found frightening just before Copenhagen was the variety of different newspapers' headlines totally dominated by leaked emails reports. And even after Christmas, again, that's been dominating: all this stuff about global warming is false, blah, blah, blah. And I get so cross seeing all of this, that the actual voice of, I don't know - 1,700 scientists in Copenhagen just doesn't have a voice.

And I'm thinking do they need a PR agency or something like that just to help them, because their voice is completely dampened. And climate change is frightening, I know climate change is a fact, but you go and tell anyone out there that you think that, it is a fact, and most people just laugh at you.

Fiona Fox There's one more there and then I'm going to come back briefly to the speakers and then come back out.

Yes?

Female 4 I've got one observation and one question. The observation is just about this notion of there having been a perfect storm recently when it comes to environmental reporting. I actually think we have to look beyond just the environmental issues to look at what's gone on between - when it comes to the relationship between the public and science.

I think we have to look at things like swine flu, MMR, BSE, the Millennium Bug, you know, there is various issues that are much, much more immediate. [[?? 1:04:15]] as they were seeing and where there was a great deal of alarm and the media, I think, in lot of cases, whipped that up. And the issues turned out not to be anything like as serious as was suggested. And I think that's been a huge factor in the way the public has lost interest and lost faith in the notion of climate change.

But my question really is that I work in television and the experience I've had in recent months is a sense that at the commissioning editor level - the people that, basically, control what's on our screens - there's a view that environmental programmes - well what happened in 2009, in the same way that three or four years ago there was a resurgence of shiny floor television and before that there was the garden makeover show.

You know, it's been one, sort of, phase of television that, maybe, programs about the environment. We've come through that now, but now we're waiting to see what the next thing is, which I, personally, find absolutely terrifying is this, sort of, complete lack of sense of this being an ongoing important subject. I'm just wondering in your respective areas is that something you've experienced as well?

Fiona Fox Let's come back to the panel really briefly. Can I just add one tiny thing to Tim's point, because I think - I've seen a couple of editorials, like the *Observer* leaders saying "We will have to get better at reporting uncertainty," and I think that's a real [[?? 1:05:34]] for the media, that actually they - you know, the Met Office guys sit and give you a seminar before they tell you it's going to be a barbeque summer on probabilities and uncertainties and all of that.

And the only thing that appears the next day is the barbeque summer and then six months later they blame the scientists, even though they ignored their - so is there any prospect that in the future these papers will be true to their editorials and allow for a headline that says '*New Uncertainties in Climate Research'*?

Ben Jackson On the uncertainty thing, I mean, it's my first year in doing this, I was only [[?? 1:06:19]] a year ago, and it struck me a unusual that the week of Copenhagen is when the Met Office come out with their predictions and WMO also come out with their predictions for, you know, the next 10-year period and for the next year. I personally thought the timing, perhaps, could have been better.

If you want to have an organisation that champions its integrity then I think you need to remove yourself from that link of being just before Copenhagen so that it's seen as being the tipper that hypes-up public opinion. And I think that's probably a matter of perception rather than anything else, but I thought the Met Office was slightly playing at - not playing, but slightly leading ahead of the science, I felt, slightly. And I know they've been...

Male For your information, they always release it at that time. So you're suggesting they should have deferred it because...

[[Cross Speaking 1:07:25]]

Ben Jackson ...I already only that. But, in fact, they had moved some of their projections from releasing in January, they had moved some of them forward, [[?? 1:07:37]] in December. There was some discussion at the time but it just felt a little bit provocative, I thought, at that time.

What the gentleman said about worldwide temperatures, I'm told the *Express* today has *You'll Never Believe: Temperatures Are Up Across the World in January* and, of course, they are and that is the case. I'm just talking really about the perception of what we're talking about. I'm not talking about - because we along here won't write the snow story that you see on the front of the paper every day, but people do make that link to it and you do find that that [[?? 1:08:26]] of the debate, and it's difficult to disentangle the two when that's a part of people's daily conversations.

And there was a wonderful piece from Giles Coren saying "Enough about linking the two," but it does become linked in people's minds. And when you have statistics like the worst winter in 30 years then it does affect people's thinking on climate.

Fiona Fox We're going to have to speed up a bit, I think.

Fiona Harvey On the question of uncertainties, our readers are very well versed in risk and uncertainties and so on, and so you can present them with quite nuance stories saying there's a probability of this, whatever. But I think it's very difficult in other types of media to do that and there's a temptation, if people say well, you know "I'm nearly sure about this." "Ah, so you're not quite sure?" And, of course, you can't treat science like that; science just isn't as susceptible to that kind of treatment.

On this issue of climate scientists fighting back, look, I'm really sorry but you have a problem, climate scientists, and your problem is that you're not news and that is, you know, there's not much you can do about that. The IPCC...

[[Cross Speaking 1:09:43]]

Fiona Fox You can come back in a minute.

Fiona Harvey ...if you want to get in newspaper, you have to make news and it's the sceptics who are making the news and it's the problems with the IPCC that are making the news; the problems with the emails that are making the news. You're not going to get a headline that says '*Climate, Guess What: Still Changing,*' you know.

(Laughter)

And when the IPCC came out we all covered that - we covered it very extensively. Possibly I think it would be good if the IPCC could come out with some stuff more often. I mean, we've got to wait till 2014 for the next one. What will be happening by then?

As to what will make people less sceptical: a disaster. People are not very good at thinking about long-term risks and long-term planning and so unless you - if you tell people that, you know, in 20/30 years time there's going to be no ice at the Poles and there's going to be - the heat in Africa is going to be 30° higher or whatever, people aren't very good at processing that. And so if you had a, sort of, short-term disaster then that might focus people's minds but, you know, that's not really something helpful, is it?

Richard Black The temperature anomalies, I put something on my blog back in January about that and linked to a chart, *New York Times* did the same thing. I say that not to, sort of, big myself up but just to make the interesting point that this was news to many of our editors. The people that had been very happy to see, you know, blanket coverage of snow across Britain didn't actually know that this wasn't - and this, to my mind, is actually one of the big, unspoken biases in British journalism is that we talk about Britain as though it were the world. If we could get around that we'd be doing everyone a service, not only in terms of climate change, but everything else.

Your point about - maybe I didn't express myself very well when we were talking about newspapers and so on. I would love there to be some sort of mechanism for producing a world where broadcasters and newspapers didn't produce crap. I would love there to be some sort of mechanism by which you could go back to a newspaper and say "But this was wrong," and the newspaper would have to change it, or whatever. And eventually you'd get into a cycle where people actually worried more about truth and balance and objectivity and so on than most journalists do now.

But you have to look at the realities of that and if someone is to - if you say journalists have to be fair, newspapers have to be fair, then someone has to decide what fair is and you can easily see how that can be used for political ends. Who's going to put the person in place who decides what's there? So this is a debate that could go on for hours and hours but it's problematical; it's not quite as simple as that, much as though I would love it to be.

Now, last year's - there were two questions really thrown up by the whole email thing. First of all, one concerned the behaviour of scientists and the other concerned the integrity of the underlying science. And I would completely agree that in most media reporting those two questions were conflicted and they should not have been.

And final point: what would persuade - I agree with Fiona: some sort of disaster that unequivocally lay at the door of climate change or rapidly rising temperatures, disappearing Arctic ice; all of those predictions coming true. That would probably change the public mood, I think.

Fiona Fox Briefly David, sorry. I'll start with you next.

David Adam There was the question about the IPCC. One of those great statistics that should be true but probably isn't: is that the average PhD thesis is read by 1.4 people, including the person who wrote it.

(Laughter)

Male Oh.

David Adam I think it's probably the same for the IPCC report. I'm not sure that anyone has read the entire thing from start to finish. I haven't. I have read the summaries of the policy makers of each of the three working groups and I did write a story that pointed out that, in fact, many of the scientists in Working Group One who worked on the glacier section were very unhappy with this mistake that was made by, as you say, social scientists - they did call them several times.

The question from Tim about how scientists fight back, well, you're not going to like the answer to this, but this is the truth: if you want to fight back in the media you have to fight on the territory that the media is interested in. So you're not going to get a story about the scientists fighting back saying "Temperature's still going up." If you - I mean, I've been on the phone to people about this all week, where are the Royal Society? Where are the organisations that speak for the scientists on the issues of science in society, right?

You guys get a petition together, get 2,000 signatures blaming the media for something or for attacking coverage, or go to the Press Complaints Commission; do something which takes the agenda and takes the story forward. This is the key about newspapers and the media in general: the story has to progress. And although we don't like the territory the story has progressed onto, it has taken it forward in the eyes of many people in the industry.

Fiona Fox And what you all wanted to say to the woman from Friends of the Earth is that scientists have PR agencies called Science Media Centre, yes?

(Laughter)

Fiona Fox Right, listen...

Ben Jackson Can I just come back briefly on...

Fiona Fox Yes, really briefly.

Ben Jackson ...the woman's point was what's going to change people: I don't think it's going to be a disaster; I think it's going to be walking into Tesco's and buying - as I did the other day - the zero carbon Tesco's in Britain. Or going to Nike and them telling me that the footprint of their trainer is - the carbon footprint is reduced. I'm not saying that these guys are the people who have the science at their fingertips, but I'm saying that these are the companies that are changing the way they are doing things because they believe the science and they are doing that at a rapid pace.

And I think when people see all those markets - as we do, or certainly as I do in press releases every day - of the number of companies who are doing something in this area because they believe it and they believe it's an oncoming thing and they're not put off by the fact of some leaked emails, they're not put off by cold winters; they are actually changing the way they way they do things. The airlines with oil companies, whoever they do it - they are all changing rapidly. And they will have to change more rapidly, but I think that is how it will filter down to people when they see that private enterprise across the world is changing.

Fiona Fox Look, I can't bear to finish this just now, but can I just double-check with everyone that they're happy to stay for another 10-15 minutes. Is that okay?

Male Ask the panellists.

Fiona Fox I have to ask the panellists, have you got trains to catch; can you do 10-15 minutes? Don't want to keep you from [[?? 1:16:35]] but I've just seen some interesting hands. So if we take one final round of contributions.

(Laughter)

Myles, I'm going to take you first. So this is really short questions and contributions: the last round.

Myles I've changed my mind [[?? 1:16:52]], I want to pick up on your point: do you think this issue will only actually matter when scientists don't need to get on television? You were saying we need to get a better strategy for getting on television. I'm accused by a lot of my colleagues - sorry, I'm Myles Allen from Oxford University - of pushing myself forward sometimes.

Actually, just for the record, we don't particularly - it's very uncomfortable being on television. You get asked questions you really, really know that you can't answer in the 26 seconds that you're allocated and then you're going to look a clown to your colleagues because you got the answer wrong and the editor's going to hate you because you took 29 seconds instead of 26, no matter what happens.

So when professionals take over the issue, it essentially ceases to be something that you all have to broker with taxi drivers, that's when you're going to make progress. But isn't that a little depressing for democracy, that the only way this issue can actually be addressed is by cutting the people out of it?

Fiona Fox Don't answer now. I'm really sorry.

Male 5 Very quickly, I don't think you can blame the mainstream media for climate change. I think the mainstream media was led by the nose by the right-wing denialist bloggers who have cooked up this whole conspiracy, which would have died before Copenhagen. This would've been a very short story but it kept on coming up and coming up and coming up, and it had to be covered because if you're a journalist you can't bear to ignore something that everyone else is covering, even if you know it's a total non-story, which Climate Gate is.

It changes nothing about the data; it changes nothing about anything we knew - anyone who knows the background can establish that very clearly. What I think is more interesting is that this is, basically, a [[?? 1:18:38]] war of ideologists. This is nothing to do with climate science; it's nothing to do with temperatures. This is to do with what people's perceptions are of the implications of reducing carbon emissions, which the right-wing and libertarian, sort of, political ideology can't accept and therefore it attacks climate science as a kind of proxy.

So how can we get away from this ideological hidden battle which is underlying all of this kind of controversy?

Fiona Fox Oh, my God, this is all so interesting.

Right, woman here then I'll come back down to these two; really quickly.

Female 5 Really quick point, my name's Mandy [[?? 1:19:15]] ... Education Minister ... in terms of communication, scepticism is ... point on your journey towards understanding the subject matter ... the challenge isn't met with really robust answers that it shows ... the scepticism is ... the original argument is correct, then you begin to doubt even more. So I think this is more ... movement. And obviously ... really come back and show your metal, the persuasiveness of your arguments and real cases...

The question to the journalists is are you up for more nuance debate? Are you up for recognising that we have a well-educated population in this country that actually is not going to just buy something first time around on trust? They want to actually see the debate laid out and it's in your [[?? 1:20:10]] to deliver that so that, as a media, you deliver the debate for discussion ... the democracy.

Fiona Fox Down here, yes.

Morris My name's Morris [[??1:20:21]]. I just wondered, is the two different domains - journalism's obviously a completely different domain than science in which it's in a political and entirely different context so that in the late 19th century lots of journalists believed that if they only published the facts about everything, public opinion would change. And there are many examples where journalism has published lots of facts and public opinion doesn't change, because it's only one form.

And on the question - I mean, just two other quick points - on the question [[?? 1:20:52]] there's some kind of difference between journalism science and science as pure review, can you guarantee that pure review has always stopped the perpetration of [[?? 1:21:00]]?

Thirdly, I know people who have now become very keen climate change campaigners, who 15 years ago would've told you that science was all a conspiracy, reason was a conspiracy against - was a political conspiracy and that you shouldn't believe in reason because it was all - scientists were all for destroying the planet and now - so I think there's an issue about what science and reason means, much bigger than just climate change.

Fiona Fox These contributions get broader and broader.

Yes, here.

Male 6 I would like to come back to what the gentleman said about the glaciers [[?? 1:21:37]]. My question really is: where do we go from here when we're searching for our stories, given the fact that we already have ... but, you know, kind of, people would not trust it anymore. Where do we go finding data for ... about glaciers especially ...

Fiona Fox Woman here.

Carolina My name's Carolina, I work for the Global [[?? 1:21:57]] programme.

My question is: to which extent the sceptic is your editor?

Fiona Fox Almost always I think.

Carolina And just a second question to Fiona: to which extent do you really want the headline that climate change has changed, because I don't know how many readers would be around by then.

Fiona Fox I know this is cruel but I'm taking two more. This guy and this guy and I'm really sorry to everyone I haven't taken.

Male 7 We've got the global issue here: to what extent is the British media influential abroad; does it have an audience abroad?

Male 8 Very briefly, I was interested to hear your thoughts on reporting climate change becoming reporting of the environment because I do know there is a, sort of, dichotomy now between - if you want to do any sort of work in an environmental field you have to use the words climate change. And I was wondering how much you guys think about that when you're reporting these issues because it seems that you have to use these two words when you're talking about anything and obviously there are lots of other issues.

Fiona Fox I'm going to start with you this time.

David Adam Yes, sure. On that one, because that's the only one I can remember - and I've forgotten it, what was it...

(Laughter)

Fiona Fox About the difference between reporting environment and reporting...

David Adam You're quite right, I mean, there is a tendency to see environment through a prism of climate change now and it is a point that I try and make to people - to my editors that the reason people care about climate change is because of the impact on the natural world and on species and on human society, and many of those things are under stress now. And if people care about if there are animals dying-off in 50 years because of temperature they will care about them being killed-off now because of the forests being chopped down [[?? 1:23:42]], so yes, I mean, you are quite right.

Most of the other questions were about society and the media and we could almost be having this very same debate a year ago, and it's not predicated on the fact that the emails have produced this debate. There's very legitimate questions about how we reflect uncertainty; how we get across, as you said, this issue of debate. Is there a debate; where is the debate?

And I think I'll make two points: one is that climate change is a very, very difficult problem for society and for the media because of its scale. It works on geological timescales way beyond one human's lifetime, effectively. I know we can see changes in 50 years maybe; we're talking about changes by the end of the century when all of us will be dead. It's something that cannot be proven until it has happened and so you have to take a precautionary approach, which is very difficult in policy making and it is impossible for people to believe with the evidence of their own eyes; they have to take issues on trust.

And one of the things we've, kind of, skirted around here is before you, you have four extremely straight journalists who work for organisations who want to get this right. I know we don't always get it right but we really do want to get this right. There are people out there who produce newspapers and who write websites who don't want to get it right; they want to put forward an

agenda. And that is an issue that isn't just based on climate scientists or people who care about climate change and that's a much wider question because of science.

And I'll make one final observation and it comes down to the fact that the role of the media in society, reflected on issues like climate change, has changed, I think. Because, whereas once we used to be the presenter of facts, now people get their facts from the websites and from television and from radio and they're getting much quicker than waiting for the next days' newspapers. So we've moved very, very strategically into trying to provide analysis and commentary. And I think that the danger there is that too quickly we move from an issue where we have to establish the facts to an issue where we're providing analysis and commentary. Until you have that really solid evidence base, I don't think you have a solid base to provide that analysis and commentary.

And I think the other question: how much people want to pay for people to do research and to establish the facts, because we live in a world now where people expect everything for free on the Internet. And the *Guardian*, I think *FT's* been okay, but we're really struggling. People aren't buying newspapers anymore because people expect to get it all for free. And there's a bigger issue here about what we want our media to do for us. And at the moment I agree; I don't think we are, talking generally, probably providing the service on this issue that we should, but the evidence that people want to pay for that service is decreasing.

Richard Black Speaking on a few of these points: is the British media influential abroad? Yes, I think it is. I mean, the BBC is, the *Guardian* is, the *FT* is, don't know about the *Sun*, but...

(Laughter)

...the most influential media organisations globally are the news agencies - Reuters, AFP, AP - and fortunately, I think, by and large, they do a really good job on climate change; they tend to report things very, very straight, very factually, no nonsense, no spin. They do a very good job, I think, personally.

Sceptics as editors: absolutely. In an organisation the size of the BBC also there are many, many editors. There are big ones who we never see, they're like Fiona's one: sit in a room surrounded by underlings; and then there are all the editors. Look at the, for example, the 5 Live schedule through the day: each of those programmes has a different editor and they can all - and if - I know for a fact that a number of them have harboured clandestinely sceptical thoughts and...

(Laughter)

...Fiona said Clive gave them permission to come out and revisit all those things. A lot of journalists are people who are pretty hard-bitten and they don't like people telling them what facts are, because they know because they are sceptical about this, that and the other. So suddenly - and even in the BBC, some of us correspondents, we've got criticism from the editors "You told us this was a done deal. You told us Copenhagen was going to be the global solution. You don't know what you're talking about. Now we know it's a pack of lies." Well, not quite in those strident terms but that was the implication, so completely, yes.

And we're not always that influential, us correspondents, we're actually quite humble people.

Mark, I absolutely agree with you: we are in the middle of a war of politics and scientists have become a pawn in this war and so have media organisations, particularly those like the BBC that have stayed funded and I think that is the key to understand this. It's not an issue of right or wrong, because if you say "Which is right or wrong out of the Labour party policies or the Conservative party's policies?" It's a meaningless question to ask because in the arena of politics it's not about right and wrong, it's about belief and perception and getting your message across.

Ronald Regan was a very successful president because he was very good at getting the message across. The content of the message was almost irrelevant.

And last thing, the climate change versus overall environment: completely agree. In fact, I did a programme on this on Radio 4 in the summer 'Has Climate Change Hijacked the Broader

Environmental Agenda?' got quite a lot of abuse from various [[?? 1:29:24]] for doing it, but there you go. In fact, I was hoping that this year, having sorted out climate change in Copenhagen...

[[Cross-speaking 1:29:35]]

...till the frigging emails...

(Laughter)

...then it descended into farce, so [[?? 1:29:41]].

Fiona Harvey I think a lot of us were expecting to maybe having a lull after Copenhagen and it never happened.

On the question of editors being sceptical: yes, editors are trained to be sceptical and they are trained to keep [[?? 1:30:01]] on stories and to really take an imposing point of view and that's perfectly reasonable. But I think most editors are actually reasonable people and if you say "Look, this is what sceptics are saying, but this is what mainstream scientists are saying," they accept that and they will accept that.

Most editors on papers that don't have an agenda - and as David was saying, I know that some do and that's completely different - this influence abroad, yes, we have four completely separate international editions all around the world and - I think it's slightly more than half of our circulation's actually abroad - and we used to - I think people used to have this attitude that in some parts of the world people weren't interested in the environment, and that's been shown to be completely untrue. That actually, our readers everywhere are interested in environmental stories and are more interested than they've ever been.

And partly it's because of what Ben was saying earlier that this is something that is taking over business, you know, Tesco's and the Nike's of this world and so on. I think that's a good thing; I think that's very positive.

On the issue of putting this message across and scientists regaining trust after Climate Gate: I think the best thing that climate scientists could do is get David Attenborough out more, because everyone in this country trusts everything that David Attenborough says...

(Laughter)

...and, you know, quite rightly. And he's hugely influential and he should be out there all the time because he's fantastic. And if he says climate change is real then people will believe him.

Fiona Fox As long as he's not having affairs.

(Laughter)

David Adam We won't mention that.

Fiona Fox Yes, a rumour will start here tonight.

Ben Jackson I don't think there's very much I can add to those answers because I'm painfully aware that a roomful of students on a Friday night...

(Laughter)

...there's a hell of a rush to the door, but I just want to answer briefly Myles' point: I thought, yes, I agree with you that the scientists don't need to come clean with the answer 'This is the Truth' and that certainly is some headline I want to steer away from. The idea, to me, is that what we've been talking about is a battle that's been lost within the area of climate change.

But certainly the greater war, I think, will be won - to use a terrible analogy - by the scientists with the work they have done and the work that continually appears across the world. And I don't

think - no one scientist needs to stand up and say that. And I think if we're going to look back in five years' time and say what went wrong then what we've been talking about today won't matter at all. What, I think, we'll look back upon is a failure of the political process in Copenhagen much more than the emails and I think that is the sad thing for the world.

Fiona Fox That's a really lovely, positive way - can I just have two seconds to make one point?

I think the main lesson that the SMC - Science Media Centre - has learned is that every media frenzy is an opportunity and a threat, and this is an opportunity for climate scientists. A lot of times they're not that interested in you; now they are interested in you. Myles, if you've got a column you can fight it now; six months ago you may not have been able to and I think it's absolutely critical. I spoke to a scientist last week who actually said the words "Climate change is too important to debate."

The truth is that climate change is too important not to debate and the responsibility here for scientists and for journalists is to ensure that that debate is informed by the best and most accurate science. And that is the responsibility of journalists and that is the responsibility of scientists and both of us need to step up to the plate. So thank you so much for coming.
