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Thank you for your letter dated 20 October enclosing correspondence from your constituent, REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED enquiry concerns the recent resignation of Professor Hal Lewis from the American Physical Society (APS), which he cites as evidence that man-made climate change is not happening. I am replying as this matter falls within my portfolio.

I can assure your constituent that climate change policy is informed by the very best available scientific advice. Professor Lewis is of course entitled to his opinion, but it is not consistent with the view of the vast majority of climate scientists that climate change is happening and that most of the warming over recent decades is very likely caused by increased greenhouse gas emissions from human activity. This view is supported by direct empirical evidence as well as the detection of the “signal” of human influence on climate in a number of changes observed over the past few decades. An excellent summary can be found at the website of the Government’s Chief Scientist at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/go-science/climatescience/causes>. I would also point out that all the leading scientific institutions and national scientific academies agree that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activity are changing the global climate.

If human greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated there is a significant risk that, within a century, global temperatures could reach a level well beyond the range of human experience since the dawn of human civilisation. This is shown in the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), accepted by the overwhelming majority of scientists as the authoritative document on climate change science. Such a rapid and large change in global climate is regarded by most scientists as a potential major threat to future global security, prosperity and equity.

Regarding Professor Lewis’s public resignation from the APS, his view that the integrity of climate change science is seriously compromised seems to stem largely from the November 2009 “climategate” e-mail leak from the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit. In this regard, I would point out that there have been three separate investigations in the UK into that incident and none of these have uncovered any evidence of scientific fraud or any kind of scientific malpractice by the scientists that were investigated.

As to the APS itself, their management policies are a matter for the APS, but they have issued a response to Professor Lewis’s resignation letter which can be read at this web-link: <http://www.aps.org/about/pressreleases/haroldlewis.cfm>

