

CLIMATEGATE II- PRESS REPORTS OF A SECOND RELEASE OF HACKED EMAILS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA

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Date Submitted: 22 November 2011
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To: 1. Secretary of State
2. Defra Ministers
3. Permanent Secretary
4. Bob Watson

Issues

1. A large number of new emails apparently hacked from the University of East Anglia's servers in 2009 have been published online and picked up by the media.
2. The big picture is a repeat of the 2009 "Climategate" event, and appears similarly timed to disrupt the UNFCCC negotiations in Durban, and to damage the reputation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. DECC are leading on the response to this.
3. The material contains a segment of an email from a Defra official (REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED) to colleagues at the University, which taken out of context could be exploited.

Timing

4. **Immediate**- press office are dealing with media enquiries.

Recommendation

5. That private offices include the following lines to take in appropriate briefings:

From DECC on the wider issues:

"There have already been three separate reviews which found no evidence of scientific malpractice at the University of East Anglia. As with reports of errors in the IPCC 4th Assessment report, nothing whatsoever has been found to undermine the underlying scientific evidence for human-induced climate change.

"We deplore any illegal release of private emails and other data. We need to focus on the important UN climate change talks in Durban next week, this is a poor attempt to distract from that vital work".

On the Defra email segment:

“This routine email between a Defra official and a contractor, explains strong Ministerial interest in the pros and cons of a technical scientific tool called the Weather Generator. The tool is based on the best available science, was independently peer reviewed, & was launched by the Secretary of State in the last administration as part of the “UKCP09 climate projections” which help people examine future climate scenarios”.

Background

6. One of the hacked email segments is of an email from a Defra official (REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED) to REDACTED REDACTED in May 2009, discussing briefing for Ministers on the UK Climate Projections project. The text segment states “.....I can’t overstate the HUGE amount of political interest in the project as a message that the Government can give on climate change to help them tell their story. They want the story to be a very strong one and don’t want to be made to look foolish.....”.
7. This conversation relates to a longer discussion between the Defra technical project lead and the contractors at UEA on a statistical tool called a “weather generator”, which is part of the package of climate information provided by the UK Climate Projections project. The weather generator provides statistical data about future daily climate variables such as episodes of heavy rain or very hot days. The discussion (of which the leaked sentence is one part) was a conversation in which the Defra official was explaining to the contractor team that it was important for Ministers to have detailed briefing in order to correctly explain the tool to others.
8. The weather generator tool operates at a very small spatial scale (5km) which generated some contention within the climate science community whilst it was in development, as there are valid questions about the robustness of a climate projection tool operating at such a small scale. The request to the contractor was for information to help explain the strengths and limitations of the tool.
9. The project, including the weather generator tool, was assessed by a peer review panel in January 2009. The findings of the peer review were published. The weather generator tool was also peer reviewed at the project inception stage. The peer reviews both suggested that the approach used was valid, but that caveats needed to be explained.
10. The weather generator tool was launched by the Defra Secretary of State, along with the rest of the project, in June 2009. The tool is widely used by climate impact researchers, including projects funded through the Research

Councils, UK Water Industry Research, the Environment Agency, Local Councils, the Macaulay Institute, and Manchester University to name but a few.

11. The hacked emails also contain excerpts of emails from Bob Watson, Defra's Chief Scientist; these do not appear to be causing media interest.

Description of the UK Climate Projections Weather Generator

12. The weather generator is a tool that analyses the possible changes in the frequency of weather events as a result of climate change, such as heat waves or droughts. The climate projections by themselves cannot do this, so weather generators are very useful for this reason.
13. The weather generator does not generate actual weather, and it does not give a weather forecast for the future. It provides information on how often and in what sequences different types of weather could occur in the future as a result of climate change, not when they will occur.
14. Weather generators have been used by climate researchers for the past 20 years, so they are an established tool.
15. The weather generator uses observed weather patterns at a scale of 5km, and provides future outputs at the same scale.
15. Defra funded the University of East Anglia and Newcastle University to produce the tool between 2006 and 2009.

Copyees

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