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**Friends of  
the Earth**

# Briefing

# What the climate sceptics say

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## **Summary**

This briefing outlines a number of the main statements made by climate sceptics, often as a reason to delay action on climate change, despite cutting carbon also being good news for the UK's energy security, creating new jobs and industries, and in many cases saving householders money.

- **Climate change isn't man-made**

There is at least a 90 per cent chance that most of the climate change that has happened since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is man-made and is serious according to the 450 scientific authors and 2500 reviewers of the biggest science review of climate change ever (the IPCC report), and all the major National Academies of Science across the globe.

[http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf)

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/includes/climatechangestatement.pdf>

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/includes/G8+5energy-climate09.pdf>

- **Himalayan glaciers are not going to melt as fast as the famous IPCC report says** (the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report).

True. There was a mistake in the almost 3000 page report that should have been spotted and corrected. But one small mistake, which wasn't repeated in summaries produced for policy makers, doesn't negate the rest of the report, just as one mistake in the Encyclopaedia Britannica doesn't make the book worthless. Glaciers are melting across the World at a fast rate because the Earth is warming.

To read more on Glaciers see:

<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg1/ar4-wg1-chapter4.pdf>

- **The IPCC report is full of "grey sources" of information that haven't been properly evaluated.**

It is true that the IPCC report uses information that hasn't been peer-reviewed, and there are legitimate debates about whether this is good science or not. The reality is that where there is peer-reviewed science the IPCC will use these, and the vast majority of the 18,000 references are peer reviewed. But where there are gaps they have to look for other sources, for example Government reports, World Bank reports, etc. The gaps are being filled by peer-reviewed science as time moves on. The more research that is carried out tends to suggest that the IPCC report underestimated many of the impacts of climate change. The IPCC report still represents the most authoritative report on our current state of knowledge of climate change. Its next report will be even stronger because the science is getting better and it will say that

human-made climate change is happening and urgent action is necessary.

<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/press/ipcc-statement-principles-procedures-02-2010.pdf>

- **Leaked e-mails show scientists can't be trusted.**

The e-mails stolen from the University of East Anglia were used by climate sceptics to suggest that claims that the planet has warmed were skewed. There are two important points here. Firstly there is no evidence that this is the case, just interpretations of loose language by a researcher talking to another researcher. Secondly, and more importantly, the evidence on whether the world has warmed was based on 3 separate sets of data and all agreed with each other. So even if one data set was dodgy the other two still provide strong evidence.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn18238-why-theres-no-sign-of-a-climate-conspiracy-in-hacked-emails.html?full=true>

- **Water vapour is the largest greenhouse gas not carbon dioxide; levels of carbon dioxide are irrelevant.**

It is true that around 50 per cent of the greenhouse effect is due to water vapour, with 25 per cent due to clouds, 20 per cent to carbon dioxide and 5 per cent to other gases. But water vapour does not accumulate in the atmosphere over time as carbon dioxide does. This is why carbon dioxide is a problem, is a large part of why climate change is happening, and is a driver of climate change. Recent research is suggesting that increases in water vapour may have been responsible for a third of the warming in the 1990s and a decline in water vapour from 2000 may have provided some cooling. Carbon dioxide remains the major driver of climate change.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11652-climate-myths-co2-isnt-the-most-important-greenhouse-gas.html>

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn18457-water-vapour-worse-climate-change-villain-than-thought.html>

- **Sunspots are to blame; climate change is part of a natural cycle.**

Solar activity clearly has had a strong influence on global temperatures in the past. Most studies show that before the industrial revolution there was a strong correlation between temperature and 'natural forcing' such as solar activity or volcanoes. But in recent times this strong correlation was broken; the earth has warmed significantly with no corresponding increase in solar activity. The climate models indicate that the recent warming is due to man-made greenhouse gases.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11650-climate-myths-global-warming-is-down-to-the-sun-not-humans.html>

- **The Earth is getting cooler rather than warmer.**

Despite a cold winter in the UK over the last two years the planet is getting warmer. The important data to look at is the trend. In the same way that it is impossible to predict the winner of the Premiership based on two results it is impossible to say what's happening with the climate on two years data. Data over recent years suggests that climate change is happening, with the 10 warmest years on record have occurred since 1997.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17808-climate-myths-any-cooling-disproves-global-warming.html>

- **Climate scientists have a vested interest in claiming climate change.**

Climate change science has been built-up over many years by scientists with no obvious vested interest in claiming climate change is happening. Even many of the big oil companies, who have most to lose over a switch from fossil fuels and have their own payroll scientists, say that climate change is happening and is man-made. There is some evidence however that Exxon-Mobil has adopted the tactics of the tobacco industry in its efforts to slow down action on climate change.

<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9028012&contentId=7050978>

[http://www.ucsusa.org/global\\_warming/science\\_and\\_impacts/global\\_warming\\_contrarians/exxonmobil-report-smoke.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/global_warming_contrarians/exxonmobil-report-smoke.html)

- **Climate change is just an excuse for stealth taxes.**

It is true that taxes have increased since the Labour Party was elected in 1997. Spending has also increased on e.g. education and the health service. Green taxes make up a smaller proportion of taxes than when Labour was elected and the Kyoto Protocol was agreed. However, Friends of the Earth supports green taxes to shift us from an addiction to fossil fuels and to cleaner alternatives. This will help our economy become more energy efficient and survive the likely massive oil price increases in the future.

**For further information**

On the funding of climate sceptics by Exxon Mobil:

[http://www.ucsusa.org/global\\_warming/science\\_and\\_impacts/global\\_warming\\_contrarians/exxonmobil-report-smoke.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/global_warming_contrarians/exxonmobil-report-smoke.html)

On the IPCC reports:

<http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2010/02/ipcc-errors-facts-and-spin/>

The National Academy of Science in the UK, The Royal Society, report on climate chance: <http://royalsociety.org/Preventing-dangerous-climate-change/>

The New Scientist magazine analysis of the claims made by climate sceptics, and a report by the Royal Society covering some of the claims:

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11462-climate-change-a-guide-for-the-perplexed.html>

[http://royalsociety.org/uploadedFiles/Royal\\_Society\\_Content/News\\_and\\_Issues/Science\\_Issues/Climate\\_change/Climate\\_booklet\\_RS1420\\_reprint\\_Dec08.pdf](http://royalsociety.org/uploadedFiles/Royal_Society_Content/News_and_Issues/Science_Issues/Climate_change/Climate_booklet_RS1420_reprint_Dec08.pdf)

The IPCC synthesis report for policy makers:

[http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf)

On peak oil:

[http://peakoiltaskforce.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/final-report-uk-itpoes\\_report\\_the-oil-crunch\\_feb20101.pdf](http://peakoiltaskforce.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/final-report-uk-itpoes_report_the-oil-crunch_feb20101.pdf)

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