

A promotional image for a BBC program. Paul Homewood is seated at a desk in a studio, wearing a dark red suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He has a surprised or concerned expression. Behind him, a large, fiery volcanic eruption with thick, dark smoke fills the sky. A microphone is visible on the desk to the left.

TALL CLIMATE TALES
FROM THE BBC

Paul Homewood

NETZERO
WATCH

Tall Climate Tales from the BBC

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About the author

Paul Homewood had a career as an accountant in industry. He has been writing on climate and energy issues since 2011.





Introduction

The BBC's coverage of climate change and related policy issues, such as energy policy, has long been of serious and widespread concern. There have been numerous instances of factual errors, bias and omission of alternative views to the BBC's narrative. Our 2022 paper, *Institutional Alarmism*,¹ provided many examples. Some led to formal complaints, later upheld by the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit. However, many programmes and articles escaped such attention, though they were equally biased and misleading.

The purpose of this paper is to update that previous analysis with further instances of factual errors, misinformation, half truths, omissions and sheer bias. These either post-date the original report or were not included previously. However, the list is still by no means complete.

The case for the prosecution

The third most active hurricane season

In December 2021, BBC News reported that 'The 2021 Atlantic hurricane season has now officially ended, and it's been the third most active on record.'² It was nothing of the sort. There were seven Atlantic hurricanes in 2021, and since 1851 there have been 32 years with a higher count.

The article also made great play of the fact that all of the pre-determined names had been used up, implying that hurricanes are becoming more common. They failed to explain, however, that with satellite technology we are now able to spot hurricanes in mid-ocean that would have been missed before.

Hurricanes: are they getting more violent?

Shortly after Hurricane Ian in September 2022, a BBC 'Reality Check' claimed that 'Hurricanes are among the most violent storms on Earth and there's evidence they're getting more powerful.'³ The video offered absolutely no data or evidence to back up this claim, which contradicted the official agencies. For instance, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) state in their latest review:

There is no strong evidence of century-scale increasing trends in U.S. landfalling hurricanes or major hurricanes. Similarly for Atlantic *basin-wide* hurricane frequency (after adjusting for observing capabilities), there is not strong evidence for an increase since the late 1800s in hurricanes, major hurricanes, or the proportion of hurricanes that reach major hurricane intensity.⁴

The IPCC came to a similar conclusion about hurricanes globally in their latest Assessment Review. However, the BBC article failed to mention any of this.

The Norfolk village crumbling into the sea

Coastal erosion in Norfolk has been a go-to issue for the BBC's climate change propagandists. In January 2023, a BBC News reporter visited Happisburgh, one of the villages affected, and spoke to a resident. The report claimed that 'punishing weather conditions linked to climate change have eroded so much of the village's soft sandy rock that her house is now the last one before the cliff edge'.⁵

In fact, the coast in that part of Norfolk has been retreating for thousands of years, for reasons that are geological rather than climatological. According to the British Geological Society:

It is likely that the Norfolk cliffs have been eroding at the present rate for about the last 5000 years.⁶

The historical record also clearly details the loss of large chunks of the village to the sea since the Middle Ages. Following a complaint, the BBC have been unable to offer any evidence for their claim.

Heat pumps are much cheaper to run

In BBC world, all renewable and low carbon technologies are wonderful. In October 2021, BBC News claimed that 'heat pumps are much cheaper to run' than gas boilers.⁷ There is no truth in this, as the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit was finally forced to admit sixteen months later.⁸ Quite why it took them so long to correct such a blatantly obvious error is a mystery.

Svalbard: the fastest warming place on Earth

In October 2022, the BBC published a long report on the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, reporting that 'the temperature in Svalbard has jumped 4C [sic] in the past 50 years'.⁹ However, they failed to point out that temperatures in that part of the world plunged between the 1950s and 70s, and are now only about a degree higher than at the start of the 20th century.

Pakistan floods: one third of country is under water

Reporting on the dreadful floods in Pakistan in summer 2022, the BBC stated:

One-third of Pakistan has been completely submerged by historic flooding, its climate minister says.¹⁰

A quick map check would have told the reporter that this claim was simply absurd, as most of Pakistan is covered by mountains and deserts. A subsequent BBC programme, *More Or Less*, admitted the claim was false, and estimated that the real figure was about 10%.¹¹ Incredibly though, Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change, made exactly the same false claim in a BBC interview in January 2023. The BBC interviewer failed to challenge him.¹²

Sri Lanka's food crisis

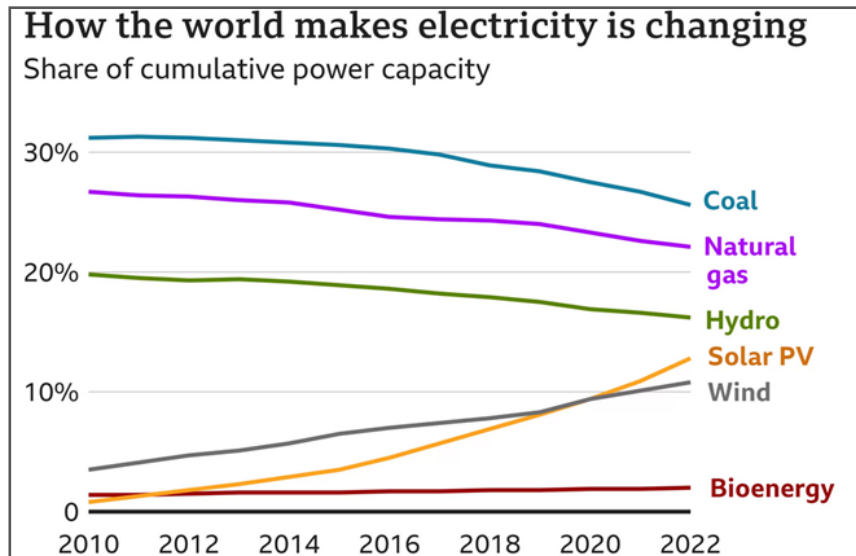
For the last year, Sri Lanka has been in the grip of an economic crisis, occasioned by food shortages. It is widely accepted that the underlying cause was the government's 2021 decision to ban the importation of chemical fertilisers. Even the UN has recognised the serious impact this has had on farming yields.

The ban was primarily a result of Sri Lanka's climate agenda, with then President Rajapaksa boasting about it at COP26. This truth was much too inconvenient for the BBC, who first tried to blame it on President Putin of Russia on *Newsnight*.¹³ Then, when that nonsense was exposed, they proceeded to claim that the ban was imposed to protect the country's dwindling foreign reserves, a clearly ridiculous claim given that tea exports had been badly hit as a result of the ban.¹⁴

Puff piece for solar power

The BBC regularly publishes puff pieces for renewable energy. One such article, 'Queen Elizabeth Prize: Solar team wins prestigious engineering award', was written in February this year, with the usual over-the-top praise for how wonderful solar power is and claiming that its uptake is rocketing.¹⁵ To illustrate its message, it used a graph showing share of power capacity (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The graph from the BBC report.



Readers seeing it would naturally have believed that solar power is now a significant contributor to the energy mix. Unfortunately, the BBC forgot to explain that capacity and electricity generation are two different things, and that because solar power only produces a small fraction of its capacity (just 11% in the UK), it still only supplies 3% of the world's electricity.

Extreme weather is the norm

The BBC uncritically reported the World Meteorological Organization's latest claims that 'extreme weather events are the new normal'.¹⁶ Yet this idea contradicts successive reviews from the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Moreover, just a month before the BBC ran the story, an authoritative study had concluded that there was no clear positive trend in extreme events, such as floods, droughts, tropical cyclones or tornadoes.¹⁷

It is the common practice of the BBC to cover the most extremist climate claims, such as the WMO's, without challenge, without providing supporting data, and without reporting on the views of scientists who disagree.

Bee-eaters 'worrying sign of climate change'

Last summer a few bee-eaters (see Figure 2) turned up in Norfolk, to the delight of twitchers. But for the BBC this news was worrying, as they reported:

Rare 'rainbow birds' trying to breed in the UK was a worrying sign of how our climate is changing.

Pushed northwards by climate change, these exotic birds will likely become established summer visitors in the future, having been an early and unmissable sign in the past two decades that the nature and climate emergency has reached our shores.¹⁸

In fact, as any half-knowledgable bird watcher would have told the BBC, bee-eaters have frequently visited England in the past. These sightings have been very carefully recorded in British bird books, as far back as 1793. Indeed, one archive alone lists 80 sightings between 1793 and 1957.¹⁹

Figure 2: European bee-eater.



Trees threatened by climate change

According to the BBC, a study has found that many trees in cities in England are at risk of drought linked to climate change.²⁰ Many are already supposedly stressed. Drier weather under climate change is expected to have a big impact on trees, particu-

larly in York, London and Birmingham, we are told.

Yet Met Office data shows that these areas are not getting drier; nor is there any evidence that they will. Once again, the BBC is uncritically presenting a controversial study as factual.

Driest start to year since 1976

England certainly had a notably dry spring and summer last year. But maybe not quite as dry as the BBC would like you to believe. On 26 July 2022, their report claimed that it had been the driest January to June in England since 1976.²¹ It's a pity they did not check the Met Office data first, which would have told them it had actually been drier in 1996 and 2010.²¹ But 'driest start to the year since 2010' hardly has the same ring to it!

The article also featured a photo of a dried-up reservoir. In fact, this was trick photography, as the dried up part was merely a small area at the head of the Dowry Reservoir, near Oldham. Similar images of the same part of the reservoir have often been published in past years, such as 2013 and 2019.²¹

Heatwave in India

It was unusually hot in Delhi and other parts of India in May last year. The BBC was quick to leap into action, with claims of record temperatures in Delhi and how such heatwaves were now 100 times more likely because of climate change.^{22,23}

Unsurprisingly, the facts were not quite as straightforward. Delhi has several long-running weather stations, and none of them reported record temperatures. For instance, at Safdarjan Airport, which is listed by the Indian Meteorological Dept as a Base Station because of its high quality, the temperature peaked at only 45.6°C, well below the record of 47.2°C set in 1944.²⁴ Other long-running sites showed a similar pattern.

The new 'record' of 49°C was set in the Delhi suburb of Mungeshpur. However, the weather station there had only begun operations a few months earlier, so claims of a record are meaningless. Worse still, it is situated in the middle of a heavily industrialised area, described by locals as a concrete jungle.

In short, the new record was the result of a poorly sited thermometer, not climate change.

Empty reservoirs in February

It was quite dry in England this February, so, despite near average rainfall in the winter as a whole, the BBC was keen to bang the drum warning of drought.²⁵ This was particularly dishonest, because by the time the article was written we had just had two weeks of snow and heavy rainfall, so most reservoirs were pretty much back to normal.

However, to ram home their propaganda, they included in the article a photo of a near empty reservoir, labelled 'Water levels in rivers, reservoirs and groundwater levels were abnormally low in February'.

Suspiciously, the photo included trees in full leaf. A quick in-

ternet search revealed that the photo, of Leighton Reservoir in North Yorkshire, had actually been taken in September 2021, a time of the year when reservoirs are usually low.²⁶ There's nothing like a fake image to fool the public!

UK heatwave kills thousands

A common theme of the BBC's coverage of climate change is its failure to challenge even the most absurd claims, as long as they fit in with the BBC's world view.

In October 2022, they reported that last summer's heatwave had killed more than 3000 people in Britain, based on an analysis of excess deaths by the ONS.²⁷ The claim appears at first sight to be ridiculous, given that the death toll from Hurricane Ian in Florida was only 161.

The BBC failed to point out the ONS's own explanation, namely that mortality quickly fell back below normal a few days after the hottest days. In other words, the mortalities simply occurred a few days before they would have done anyway. Furthermore, excess deaths, according to the ONS, have been running at high levels throughout the spring, summer and autumn of last year. There are many possible explanations for this, none of which have anything to do with the weather. But the BBC would prefer you to think otherwise!

Bologna floods blamed on climate change

They had not even finished counting the bodies, when the BBC jumped in to blame the tragic 2023 Bologna floods on climate change. BBC weatherman Chris Fawkes claimed in a weather video that 'As our planet warms up, climate scientists tell us that extreme weather are likely to become more frequent, and I think that really does fit the bill for Italy for what we've seen.'²⁸

It is a sad fact that floods like this one are all too common in Italy. Moreover, the data clearly shows that rainfall was more extreme in the past.

Renewable lobbyists support renewable energy

A very common aspect of the BBC's environmental coverage is to ignore or give little weight to the views of anybody who does not agree with its green agenda. In March 2022, a Radio 4 programme, *Costing The Earth*, discussed whether new North Sea oil resources should be developed.²⁹ The three guests invited to debate the matter were all renewable energy lobbyists, and unsurprisingly agreed that we should invest in renewable energy instead!

The BBC and eco-extremists

It is normal practice for the BBC to treat eco-extremists as serious people. Recently they published a long article by somebody called Gaia Vince, titled 'Is the world ready for mass migration due to climate change?'³⁰

The article, which was no more than a puff piece for Gaia's

new book, included numerous ludicrous claims, such as 'up to three billion people [are] expected to be displaced by the effects of global warming by the end of the century'.

Free speech is all well and good, but the BBC never seem to give climate realists airtime to offer alternative views.

Conclusion

In our earlier paper, *Institutional Alarmism*, we concluded:

The sheer weight of evidence presented in this paper suggests that bias is now endemic in the BBC's climate reporting.

All of the factual errors noted could easily have been avoided with a bit of basic research. Is this carried out and the results ignored if they don't agree with the BBC's agenda? Or is the corporation's output just made up and printed anyway without checks? Either way, this is journalism at its shoddy worst.

And who is editing this fake reporting? Why are they not insisting on accurate reporting? Where are the highly paid executives, who let all of this continue?'

It is apparent that nothing has changed in the last 12 months.

Notes.

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