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## Printa Climate warnings' error margins ANALYSIS

By Pallab Ghosh

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## Projections by the UK's Climate Impact Programme released on Thursday come with strict caveats about how they should be used and their margin for error.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Met Office argue that, even though the projections are fa from certain, they will be useful to help plan for climate change in the UK.

But others have warned that the uncertainties in the projections are too great to be of practical use

Defra has produced projections of climate change and consequent using advanced computer modelling techniques

Up until now, most projections have been at a sub-continental level giving information at a regional level in squares of 300km on a side

Defra's projections are among the first in the world to give information at a local level - to the scale of large cities of 25km square and, in some cases, projecting weather patterns to a village scale of 5km square.

### Planning for change

The UK's Climate Impacts Programme projections were explicitly designed to help local authority planners and businesses make investment decisions to adapt to the consequence of climate change.

But according to Dr Myles Allen of Oxford University, who was among those who carried out an independent review of the projections, said that they may not be reliable enough at this stage to policy decisions.

make some of the most important Dr Myles Allen, Oxford University

"If your d isions depend on what's happening at these very fine scales of 25 km or even 5 km resolution, then you probably shouldn't be making irreversible investment decisions now," he said.

The review, published on Thursday, says that the projections are "credible" but does raise concerns that the statistical techniques used are untested and have not been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The last assessment by a committee set up in 2007 by the The fast assessment by a commute set up in 200 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that these kinds of so-called "probabilistic" projections could only be applied reliably on a global scale - of 1000km square.

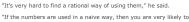
"The IPCC explicitly stepped back from making probabilistic projections on this sort of scale," said Dr Allen.

"The method that's been used to produce this projection is a very specific one.

"It's not been used before for this climate change approach and we It is not been used output to find annuale change opposed non-thought that it would be helpful to provide a much more conservative method, something the IPCC would have used in 2007 just to provide users with a context and something to compare with so that they can see which aspects of these projections are robust."

Defra has not accepted the Defra has not accepted the recommendation to provide an an alternative set of projections by the independent review panel because officials felt that having two sets would be confusing.

Dr Leonard Smith of the London School of Economics' Grantham Institute says he cannot see how any planner could make decisions on probable climate outcomes that are so uncertain that they might change substantially in 20 years



design a power plant or reservoir that doesn't meet the needs of the population.' Too far?

Many in the scientific community were particularly astonished that Defra published projections at a scale of 5km square - which are even more uncertain than the 25km square projections

Among them was Professor Sir David King who was involved i commissioning the projections when he was the government's chief

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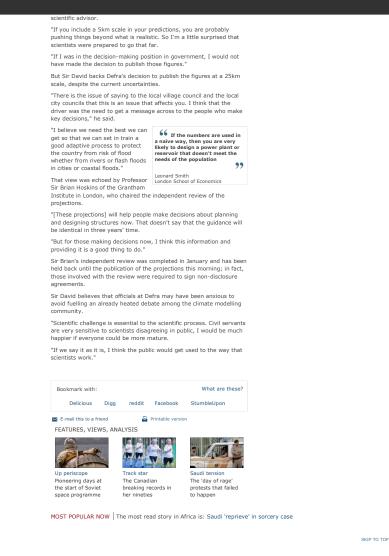
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