

The Rt. Hon the Lord Lilley
House of Lords
London
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11 October 2024

Dear Lord Lilley,

I am writing to you ahead of your motion that the House of Lords “takes note of the impact of His Majesty’s Government’s climate agenda on jobs, growth and prosperity”.

This is an extremely important issue and I am glad that you have raised it with your fellow peers. The purpose of this letter is to encourage you to draw on accurate and up-to-date information when making your contribution.

Unfortunately, your contributions to discussions about climate change policies in the House of Lords over the past year have not always been based on the factually accurate information.

For instance in a debate on “Surplus Carbon Emissions” on 24 March 2024, you stated:

“The advice from the CCC on this issue seems quite rational, but will my noble friend ask it to review the advice it has offered on the total cost of meeting net zero? It refused for over a year to produce its workings, and at great expense tried to resist freedom of information requirements. When it went to the tribunal and it was forced to reveal its workings, they were shown to be flawed in a number of ways and have now been condemned by the Royal Society as wrong. Will the Minister ask it to review them and produce some new estimates?”

Unfortunately, your claim about the Royal Society was entirely false and it has not “condemned” the estimates by the Climate Change Committee of the investments required for the UK to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The Committee has also rebutted the false claims made by Net Zero Watch and other lobby groups about the official calculations of the size of the investments required for net zero.

Furthermore, in a discussion on climate risk models on 25 January 2024, you stated, according to Hansard:

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Chair:
**Professor Lord Stern
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"My Lords, is my noble friend the Minister aware that the economic chapter of the IPCC report on climate change begins:

"For most economic sectors, the impact of climate change will be small relative to the impacts of other drivers ... Changes in population, age, income, technology, relative prices, lifestyle, regulation, governance, and many other aspects of socioeconomic development will have an impact on the supply and demand of economic goods and services that is large relative to the impact of climate change"?

"Why is the Bank of England fussing with this, rather than concentrating on the real problem of avoiding financial crises such as occurred in 2008?"

It was commendable that you were drawing on the authoritative work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. However, the summary of Chapter 10 of the contribution of IPCC working group II to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), from which you quoted, was published in 2014 and does not represent the most up-to-date assessment of the impacts of climate change.

The Synthesis Report of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report was published in 2023 and provided a more up-to-date statement of the risks of climate change, stating in its Summary for Policymakers:

"Risks and projected adverse impacts and related losses and damages from climate change will escalate with every increment of global warming (very high confidence). They are higher for global warming of 1.5°C than at present, and even higher at 2°C (high confidence). Compared to the AR5, global aggregated risk levels (Reasons for Concern) are assessed to become high to very high at lower levels of global warming due to recent evidence of observed impacts, improved process understanding, and new knowledge on exposure and vulnerability of human and natural systems, including limits to adaptation (high confidence). Due to unavoidable sea level rise, risks for coastal ecosystems, people and infrastructure will continue to increase beyond 2100 (high confidence)."

It also states:

"With further warming, climate change risks will become increasingly complex and more difficult to manage. Multiple climatic and non-climatic risk drivers will interact, resulting in compounding overall risk and risks cascading across sectors and regions. Climate-driven food insecurity and supply instability, for example, are projected to increase with increasing global warming, interacting with non-climatic risk drivers such as competition for land between urban expansion and food production, pandemics and conflict. (high confidence)"

In addition, the Third Climate Change Risk Assessment, published by the UK Government in 2022, states that "even under low warming scenarios the UK will be subject to a range of significant and costly impacts unless significant further action is taken now".

Hence it is essential that the Bank of England, and indeed every other British institution, does not dismiss, as you suggested, the growing impacts and risks that climate change is creating, but instead takes them very seriously.

As a final example, I draw attention to your contribution on 18 January 2024 to a debate on "Global Heating". During the course of your contribution, you made several inaccurate and misleading statements and misrepresented the findings of the IPCC.

For instance, you stated that "NASA satellites have monitored wildfires for a couple of decades and I looked up what the NASA site said. It said that the area burned by fires had declined by 25% over the period that it had been monitoring it". In fact, NASA's satellites record all fire activity, including deliberate burning of land for agricultural purposes, and not just wildfires. The NASA web page about fire, published in 2019, includes details of interviews with leading experts, and states:

"One of the most interesting things researchers have discovered since MODIS began collecting measurements, noted Randerson, is a decrease in the total number of square kilometers burned each year. Between 2003 and 2019, that number has dropped by roughly 25 percent.

"As populations have increased in fire-prone regions of Africa, South America, and Central Asia, grasslands and savannas have become more developed and converted into farmland. As a result, long-standing habits of burning grasslands (to clear shrubs and land for cattle or other reasons) have decreased, explained NASA Goddard Space Flight scientist Niels Andela. And instead of using fire, people increasingly use machines to clear crops.

"There are really two separate trends," said Randerson. "Even as the global burned area number has declined because of what is happening in savannas, we are seeing a significant increase in the intensity and reach of fires in the western United States because of climate change."

Hence, you misrepresented NASA's findings.

You also stated that "the IPCC says that it has neither observed, and nor does it forecast, up to the end of the century, anything unusual in the way of river floods, landslides, droughts, wind speeds, storms, cyclones or fire weather. Despite the fact that it expects a continuing rise in sea level, it does not expect that to cause any appreciable or unusual coastal floods or erosion." This again is false. The Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report states:

"Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has further strengthened since AR5. Human influence has likely increased the chance of compound extreme events since the 1950s, including increases in the frequency of concurrent heatwaves and droughts (high confidence)."

There were many other false statements in your contribution, including the use again of the out-of-date quote from the 2014 IPCC report about the economic impacts of climate change.

I hope you understand that your reliance on false claims destroys your credibility when speaking about climate change, and that you will demonstrate on 24 October that you are able and willing of speaking the truth about this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.E.J. Ward". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Bob Ward

Policy and Communications Director

Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

London School of Economics and Political Science