

The background is a vibrant watercolor wash of colors including purple, yellow, orange, and pink. In the lower portion, there is a scene where a person in a blue jacket is filming a man in a dark suit who is standing next to a professional video camera on a tripod. The man in the suit appears to be speaking or gesturing.

TALL CLIMATE TALES FROM THE BBC, 2023

Paul Homewood

NETZERO
WATCH

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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.



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Executive summary

Can the BBC's coverage of climate change be trusted? Many have now concluded that it can't. For years their treatment has been one-sided, full of misinformation and at times factual errors, along with the omission of alternative views and inconvenient facts.

We have detailed many such examples during recent years in two previous papers. This latest assessment covers the last year. It includes many examples showing how the public have been misled, but these are no doubt just the tip of the iceberg.

Far from reducing, the problem of misinformation seems to be on the rise, with an almost daily stream of what is little more than propaganda - doom laden stories of extreme weather caused by climate change. Tales of how hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, heatwaves and storms are all getting worse are never backed up by actual data, of course.

One BBC report began 'Heat. Wildfires. Torrential rain. Typhoons and hurricanes. Much of the northern hemisphere has been battered by extreme weather this summer'. There was no evidence presented that any of this was anything other than the sort of normal weather which we get every year.

Typhoons and hurricanes were not above normal for the year, while the Mediterranean wildfire season, which the BBC had been spreading alarm about all summer, turned out to be no worse than average either.

We were warned about a future without beer and bananas, and even a crocodile that bit a woman in Indonesia was, we were told, the result of climate change!

It is not only climate matters where bias and disregard for facts are evident. In the lead up to the General Election, Justin Rowlatt, the BBC's Climate Editor, writing about the Reform Party's energy policies, claimed that solar and wind power are cheaper than gas generation. Official government data shows that they are actually considerably greater; but that inconvenient truth does not fit in with the BBC's renewable agenda.

Where climate change is concerned, the BBC is now little more than a lobby group. Given the enormous cost of achieving Net Zero, not to mention the wholesale changes it will mean to people's lifestyles, the public are entitled to fully impartial reporting from the BBC.



US tornadoes getting worse?

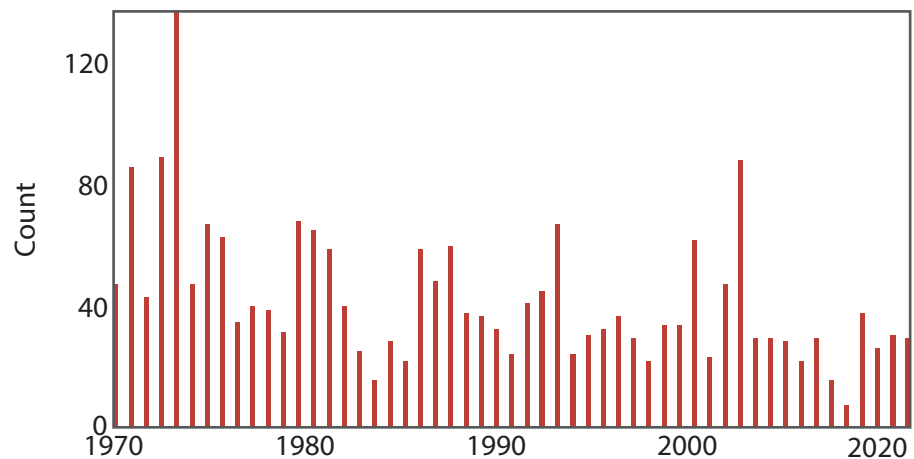
In the middle of the US tornado season last year, a BBC video,¹ supposedly presented by a US 'expert', claimed that 'greater warming is creating more severe storms, making tornadoes more likely to form on any given day'. Neither part of the statement is true.

Data from the US Storm Prediction Center has consistently shown that there has been a marked decline in the frequency of tornadoes in general, and of the strongest ones in particular.

The rest of the video is also full of incorrect claims, such as the greater impact of tornadoes in recent years. The actual data shows declining fatalities.

Figure 1: Major tornadoes in the USA, 1970–2022

Greater than EF3. Source: Storm Prediction Center.⁵⁴



Beijing's hottest day

The BBC love to blow out of all proportion record temperatures around the world, at least when they are on the hot side!

In June 2023, they announced Beijing's hottest day on record, even though it was only a tiny 0.5°C hotter than in 1961.² But what they also always fail to report is the effect of urbanisation. Since 1961, of course, Beijing has grown out of all proportion from the backwater it was then. It is well accepted scientifically that large cities full of roads, traffic, high rise buildings, industry and concrete can be four or five degrees hotter than rural areas because of the heat trapping effect (the so-called Urban Heat Island effect). But the BBC would rather blame it on climate change.

Mosquito-borne diseases on the rise in Europe

According to the BBC:³

'Mosquitoes that carry viruses like dengue and chikungunya have moved into new parts of Europe, increasing the risk of illness, top experts warn.

European scientists say more frequent heatwaves and flooding, and longer, warmer summers, have created more favourable conditions for the bugs.'

Experts however tell a different story. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, for example, explain that it is the

explosion in international trade that has been responsible for the spread of mosquitoes into Europe.⁴

The climate of Europe has always accommodated mosquitoes, even during the much colder Little Ice Age. These were largely eradicated thanks to effective control methods, in particular the reduction of larval development sites and use of pesticides.

It's hot in Spain!

It is often hot around the Mediterranean. Last July the BBC flew their Climate Editor, Justin Rowlatt, out to Spain in order to tell us how hot it was in Alicante.⁵ That day, temperatures reached 36°C, which most tourists would tell you is par for the course in that part of the world.

What Rowlatt's sister Cordelia, an Insulate Britain activist, thought of her brother's gas-guzzling flight was not reported!

Climate change lures black-winged stilts to Britain

Every time a rare bird flies across the Channel, the BBC say it's because of climate change. Last summer it was the turn of the black-winged stilt.⁶ But as any competent ornithologist could have told them, the bird has been spotted in Britain for hundreds of years. There is even a drawing of the first one recorded, which was shot in 1684!



It's hot in Portugal

In August 2023, the BBC reported that wildfires in Portugal were being fuelled by climate change amid the third heatwave of the year.⁷

In reality temperatures in the region were not abnormally high, and the area burnt by wildfires there last year was below average.⁸

China's summer of climate destruction

According to another BBC report last August:⁹

China's summer this year has seen both extreme heat and devastating floods.

And the flooding this time around has struck areas where such weather has been unheard of, with scientists – blaming climate change – warning that the worst is yet to come.

It's a common con trick used by the BBC, to conflate weather with climate.

The BBC's claim of the number of floods increasing in China was debunked in their own report by Dr Zhao Li from Greenpeace East Asia, who stated that the increase in flood numbers can be explained by China developing better systems to monitor and record flood data.

As for their claim about the flooding affected areas which not normally hit, the end of the article noted that Chinese officials had diverted floodwater to those areas in order to protect more built up areas.

Most people will only read the headlines and first few sentences, so won't have seen the real story hidden at the end of the article, which destroyed the BBC's narrative.

The extreme summer weather that scorched and soaked the world

The BBC's spin machine went into overdrive in September, with an article that began:

Heat. Wildfires. Torrential rain. Typhoons and hurricanes. Much of the northern hemisphere has been battered by extreme weather this summer.¹⁰

It left no doubt in readers' minds that all these events were much worse because of climate. As usual with the BBC, no actual data was pro-

ferred to support their claims. On the contrary, the data confirmed that none of the events they wrote about were anything other than the sort of weather we see every year.¹¹

Stonehaven train crash

Four years ago, three people sadly lost their lives when a train to Aberdeen crashed into a landslide following heavy rain. Last September, the High Court in Aberdeen found that the landslide had been caused by the incorrect installation of a drainage system, exacerbated by the lack of proper inspection by Network Rail, who were fined £6.7m for their failures.¹² Nevertheless, in another article on the same day, the BBC were still determined to lay the blame for the accident on climate change.¹³

Could extreme weather hit the 2026 FIFA World Cup?

The next World Cup is due to be held in North America, so the BBC thought it would be a good idea to scare football supporters with a bit of propaganda. Weatherman Simon King's video announced that heatwaves, droughts and wildfires could affect some of the matches at stadiums such as Dallas, Houston, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Miami.¹⁴ He used as his example last year's heatwave in Texas, which he falsely claimed to be 'record breaking', and included a chart of the temperatures set there and in the other host cities during that heatwave.

In fact, none of the temperatures he showed were unusually high. Moreover, temperatures had been even higher in Dallas, Los Angeles and Miami the last time the World Cup was held in the USA in 1994!

UK heatwave killed thousands

According to a BBC report last year, there were 'more than 4,500 deaths in England from 2022 heat',¹⁵ based on an ONS study. What the BBC forgot to tell you though was that, also according to the ONS, these deaths were merely a short-term displacement, with a fall in deaths to below average over the following days.¹⁶

In other words, people who were close to death anyway died a few days earlier than they would otherwise have done. Over the summer as

a whole, the number of deaths was no higher than usual, and much lower than any other season. Contrary to the BBC's assertion, the heatwave killed nobody.

Coastal erosion at Happisburgh

Coastal erosion on the Norfolk coast has been occurring for thousands of years. 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'.¹⁷

But the BBC believes they know better. Earlier last year they reported that 'punishing weather conditions linked to climate change have eroded so much of the village's soft sandy rock that Nicola Bayless' house is now the last one before the cliff edge'.¹⁸ Following a complaint, the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit concluded that the BBC's report was accurate, even though they could provide no evidence to back up their claim about 'punishing weather'. Nor did they think it appropriate to provide readers with the actual facts.



Crocodile bites woman

Some BBC reports on climate change are simply farcical. When a poor woman in Indonesia was attacked by a crocodile on her way to the village waterhole, the BBC went into overdrive to blame it on climate change. Apparently a drought, which they say was driven by climate change, had dried up the well in front of her house.¹⁹ There have of course always been droughts in the region, and these are driven by El Nino and Indian Ocean Dipole cycles, just as

they were again last year. There is no evidence that last year's drought was any worse than normal. Indeed, data shows that rainfall trends have been steadily increasing in Indonesia since 1950.²⁰

Are hurricanes getting more violent?

After Hurricane Idalia hit Florida last year, the BBC wheeled out their video from the year before. It featured weathergirl Louise Lear, who claimed there was evidence hurricanes were getting more powerful.²¹

This is factually incorrect. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's latest report published this year could not be clearer – there is no evidence that Atlantic hurricanes are becoming either more frequent or more powerful.²²

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 changing observing capabilities over time), 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.

True to form, the BBC also claimed that Tropical Storm Hilary, which brought heavy rain to California in August 2023, was 'record breaking' and made worse by climate change.²³

Tropical storms are rare in that part of the world, but not unheard of. Another tropical storm, El Cordonazo, hit the same part of California in 1939, and dumped similar amounts of rain.²⁴ And the San Diego hurricane which hit the State in 1858 was an even more powerful storm.

The BBC's claims of record rainfall were also fake. Hurricane Kathleen in 1976 brought much more rain and caused significantly greater flooding to California than Hilary.²⁵

BBC Planet Earth 3

BBC Planet Earth 3, presented by Sir David Attenborough, supposedly left viewers in tears, with scenes of soggy flamingo chicks strugg-

ling to survive storm surges and turtle hatchlings battling sea level rises.²⁶

It was the usual emotional blackmail we have come to expect from Attenborough. But his warning of the threats to turtles, flamingos, Cape fur seals and Southern Right whales were quickly dismissed by real experts, who inconveniently pointed out that all the species were actually thriving.²⁷

Bologna floods

In May 2023, the BBC weatherman Chris Fawkes irresponsibly claimed that half the annual rainfall had fallen in 36 hours, leading to the catastrophic floods in the Bologna region of Italy.²⁸

The claim was made with no supporting evidence, as the BBC were finally forced to admit six months later when upholding a complaint.



Scotland's changing climate

According to the BBC, Scotland's climate is changing faster than expected.²⁹ Their report made two specific claims:

- In some parts of Scotland, temperatures in February rose from a high of 16.9°C to 19.4°C
- A series of storms have delivered unprecedented weather to Scotland in recent years. Storm Arwen in 2021 brought 100 mph north-easterly winds which flattened entire forests and left many without electricity for days.

The first claim is absurd, as average February temperatures in Scotland are about 3°C! As for storms, 100-mph winds in Scotland are not unprecedented, or even unusual. Accord-

ing to the Met Office, the record wind speed is 142 mph, recorded at Fraserburgh in February 1989. The Braer storm in 1993 brought 125-mph winds, and the Burns Day storm in 1990 saw winds of 100 mph in Berwickshire.

Unprecedented Amazon drought

According to another BBC report last December:³⁰

...the Amazon rainforest experienced its worst drought on record in 2023. Many villages became unreachable by river, wildfires raged and wildlife died. Some scientists worry events like these are a sign that the world's biggest forest is fast approaching a point of no return.

As usual with the BBC, no supporting data was provided; there were only subjective comments from locals. In reality, the data actually shows that average rainfall has been increasing in the region since 1960.³¹

Chaos for UK nature

A common tactic used by the BBC is to give credence to any study that shows climate change in a bad light. At the end of last year, they reported on the National Trust's *Weather and Wildlife 2023 Review*, stating:³²

The loss of predictable weather patterns is 'causing chaos' for nature, according to the National Trust.

As usual, the BBC did not attempt to challenge any of the assertions in the review, nor bother to do any factchecking. In particular, their claim that we used to have 'predictable weather patterns' is utterly ridiculous. As was the National Trust's claim that there had been significant changes in our seasonal climate in the last decade.

Storm Henk

The BBC has been making hay ever since the Met Office decided to start naming every passing system of low pressure, building each 'storm' into some sort of apocalypse. When Storm Henk arrived in January, they reported:

Storm Henk has caused huge damage across parts of the UK, with winds of more than 90 mph

sweeping across some regions.³³

The only location that recorded 90 mph winds was The Needles, which sit on a cliff top at the end of a long promontory off the Isle of Wight. It is a totally unrepresentative site, and routinely records wind speeds at least 30 mph higher than other nearby locations. At other highly exposed coastal sites, winds only reached around 70 mph, whilst at representative sites inland winds were much lower still, typically about 30 mph. In reality, Henk brought the sort of gales that hit Britain every winter.

Pothole misery

Why let a pothole crisis go to waste? According to the BBC, reports of potholes reached a 5-year high in 2023, and naturally it was all because of climate change.³⁴

Ironically on the same day, another BBC report inadvertently revealed the truth – that potholes form when water gets into cracks in the road and freezes. A warmer climate should therefore reduce the number of potholes. Unsurprisingly this second report highlighted the real problem – lack of cash for repairs.³⁵

The original claim about climate change was made by somebody called Roger Harding. Mr Harding is not a climate scientist. Nor is he an expert on potholes. He is, however, the director of an organisation called 'Round Our Way', which campaigns on climate change!³⁶

Who needs gas?

A common way for the BBC to promote their climate change agenda is to fill their articles with comments by like-minded 'experts'. In March this year, the then Prime Minister stated – not unreasonably – that the UK needed to build a few new gas-fired power plants, in order to provide electricity on days when wind and solar power did not deliver.

But instead of including comments by energy experts in their report, they filled the page with critical comments from the Green Alliance, the Energy and Climate Information Unit, Ed Miliband, the Lib Dems and Greenpeace.³⁷ None of them were asked how they would avoid blackouts in such circumstances.

Yes, we have no bananas!

A report by the BBC's Environment Correspondent, Matt McGrath, announced that 'bananas are set to get more expensive as climate change hits a much-loved fruit'.³⁸ Climate impacts, we were told, posed an enormous threat to supply. Apparently McGrath was unaware that the world output of bananas has risen sixfold since the 1960s 'despite climate change'.

It's hot in the Sudan!

The BBC seem to be profoundly surprised that they have heatwaves in South Sudan. When temperatures reached 41°C there in March 2024, they claimed that:

it is exceptionally early for South Sudan to experience such heat – temperatures often exceed 43°C (109°F) but only in the summer months, according to the World Bank...³⁹

Typically, they had failed to do their homework properly, because the same World Bank portal tells us that March is the hottest month of the year! Summer is always the coolest season, because that is when the rains arrive.⁴⁰ Furthermore temperatures of 41°C are perfectly common in South Sudan.

Coral bleaching misinformation

Every year the BBC attempts to convince its audience that the world's coral is dying out. A new report this year claimed that 'coral around the world is turning white and even dying as recent record ocean heat takes a devastating toll'.⁴¹

This statement totally misrepresents the science, and its conclusions are not even true. Bleaching is a perfectly natural and common

event, which can take place for all sorts of reasons, including when the water gets too cold. It does not mean the coral is dying. Instead bleaching is merely part of a natural process, when coral hosts algae in a symbiotic relationship, but will expel them if the environment changes, in order to switch to a different type that is better adapted to the new conditions. Far from coral dying out around the world, coral scientists say that it is doing fine.⁴²

It's hot in Mali too!

A month later, the BBC ludicrously claimed that they never had heatwaves in Mali before 'human-induced climate change', after temperatures hit 43°C in the capital Bamako.⁴³ According to Wikipedia, Mali is one of the hottest countries in the world.

No more beer

As if dearer bananas were not enough to worry about, the BBC also warned us that 'climate change threatens to "call time" on the great British pint'.⁴⁴ Apparently it is soon going to be too hot to grow hops in Kent. This might come as a surprise to hop growers in much warmer climates in Central Europe.

European wildfires caused by climate change

The BBC spent most of the summer of 2023 blaming climate change for the severity of wildfires around the Mediterranean.^{45,46,47} When the EU finally published wildfire data for last year, it emerged that the area burnt was not unusual at all (Figure 2). In fact, since the 1980s, the area burnt has been declining.

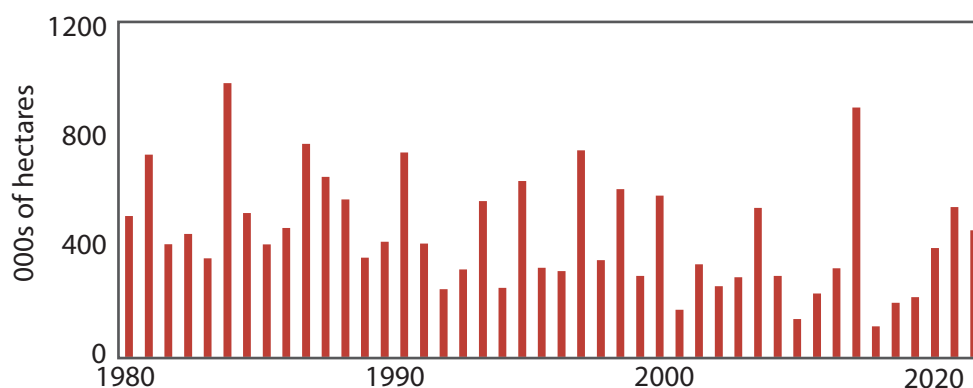


Figure 2: Area of Mediterranean burnt by wildfires, 1980–2023.⁵⁵

Is global warming making flight turbulence worse?

According to the BBC, 'Aircraft turbulence is worsening with climate change'.⁴⁸ This claim appeared in a BBC report shortly after the tragic death of a passenger on a Singapore Airlines flight during a severe turbulence incident. The fact that the BBC should want to make political capital out of such a distressing event is shocking enough. Worse still is that their claim is fake, based on worthless computer modelling. The US National Transportation Safety Board recently undertook a very detailed study on flight turbulence using real-world data recorded in flight logs. Their conclusions could not have been any clearer – there has been no increase in severe turbulence accidents since 1989, when proper records became available.⁴⁹

BBC smears Kenyan farmer

BBC Verify, the organisation's supposed disinformation experts, decided to waste money writing a long hit piece on a young Kenyan farmer, who dared to campaign for Africa to be given full access to fossil fuels.⁵⁰ This apparently made him a 'climate denier'. Quite why the BBC saw him as such a threat is a total mystery.

But above all, the whole incident revealed how climate change has become a religion for the BBC, not something to just be reported on. In BBC world, it is apparently now policy to condemn the Third World to poverty in the name of achieving Net Zero.

No, BBC, renewables are not cheaper than fossil fuels

As part of their election coverage in June, Justin Rowlatt, who is the BBC's Climate Editor, asserted as fact that 'the cost of a unit of power from a new solar or wind project is lower than the cost from a new gas generator'.⁵¹

You might have thought that the BBC would get their Energy Editor to comment on technical matters such as this, not the Climate Editor, who clearly does not know what he is talking about. And as this was written as an official analysis of the Reform UK party's manifesto, accuracy, rather than opinion, should surely be mandatory.

As any energy expert could tell you, electricity from wind and solar farms is much more expensive than gas power. Based on the Government's own Strike Prices for this year's Contracts for Difference auction, we will have to pay nearly twice as much for offshore wind than for gas power. Onshore wind and solar are also considerably more expensive. Maybe BBC Verify might like to factcheck Justin Rowlatt!

Heatwave hysteria

In June 2023, the BBC reported on what was described as an unprecedented heatwave in Delhi, where temperatures over 40°C had persisted since the end of May.⁵² What they omitted to tell readers was that these sort of temperatures are normal in Delhi at that time of year.

A day later they tried to persuade readers that the heatwave which hit the US South West in late May/early June was made 35 times more likely because of climate change.⁵³ Again the claim was absurd, as the temperatures recorded were perfectly normal for the time of year. In Phoenix, Arizona, for instance, temperatures hit 113°F, well below the record of 122°F for June, which was set in 1990.

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 twelve months.

Notes

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For further information about Net Zero Watch, please visit our website at www.netzerowatch.com.

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