

# Theresa May should press President Trump about his actions on climate change

[blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2017/01/27/theresa-may-should-press-president-trump-about-his-actions-on-climate-change/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2017/01/27/theresa-may-should-press-president-trump-about-his-actions-on-climate-change/)

1/27/2017



On 13 January, the office of the Prime Minister, Theresa May, received [a letter](#) signed by 100 members of the climate change research community about the potential threats to, and opportunities for, the UK national interest arising from the recent elections in the United States.

I had signed the letter after becoming concerned by alarming reports of plans that could severely weaken federally-funded research on climate change. The letter pointed out that such damage would “diminish the provision of robust and rigorous evidence that is used by policy-makers and researchers around the world, including in the United Kingdom”.

It is now less than a week since President Trump and his administration entered office and already there have been further disturbing media reports about threats to the supply of accurate information about climate change.

On inauguration day, The White House website was stripped of much of the content that had been added during the Obama administration, [including all information](#) about climate change.

In the past couple of days, journalists have been told of plans to censor information about climate change provided by staff at the Environmental Protection Agency. Information on climate change has already [started to disappear](#) from the Agency’s website.

Myron Ebell, who has been advising President Trump’s team about the future of the Agency, has called for massive cuts to its workforce. “Undoubtedly the federal government has been staffed with scientists who believe the global-warming alarmist agenda,” [he told a reporter](#) earlier this week. Mr Ebell is director of the [Center for Energy and Environment](#) at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which promotes climate change denial.

The future of climate change research at NASA is also in doubt. A former Republican Congressman, Robert Walker,

has been advising President Trump about space policy. Mr Walker [co-authored an article](#) in October 2016 which complained that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has been “largely reduced to a logistics agency concentrating on space station resupply and politically correct environmental monitoring”. It argued that “NASA should be focused primarily on deep space activities rather than Earth-centric work that is better handled by other agencies”.

It is news like this that persuaded the 100 members of the climate change research community to sign the joint letter to the Prime Minister. It states: “For many years, climate change researchers in the United States and United Kingdom have worked extensively with each other and with researchers from across the world. We stand ready to support and assist our counterparts in the United States, as collaborators, co-authors and colleagues, in resisting any political attempts to prevent, hamper or interfere with vital research on climate change.”

[I have now written to Greg Clark](#), the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the cabinet minister responsible for government funding of UK climate change research, to point out that our fears of political interference are beginning to be realised.

The letter asks the Secretary of State to “draw the attention of the Prime Minister ahead of her meeting with President Trump this week to widespread concerns among researchers in the United Kingdom about these developments, and ask her to seek assurances that the United States will continue to offer robust and reliable information and research about climate change to policy-makers in the United Kingdom and around the world”.

In a [statement](#) earlier this week, Ken Kimmell, the President of the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington DC, said: “It’s simple: Public servants should be free to state simple scientific facts. Americans have the right to see and benefit from taxpayer-funded research, and scientists have the right to share their findings openly and honestly, without political pressure, manipulation or suppression. Political staff should never be in charge of deciding what scientific conclusions are acceptable for public consumption.”

I think members of the climate change research community in the UK share this view. We will remain vigilant over the coming days, weeks and months, ready to speak out in protest if Mr Trump’s administration continues to interfere in the performance and presentation of climate change research.

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*Notes:*

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