VALEDICTORY EDITORIAL

Threats to Climate Research Endanger an Already Imperilled Climate System—We Must Face Them with Hope, Drive, Novelty and Charity

On the 16th December, the US federal government announced it would be breaking up the National Centre for Atmospheric Research as it was "one of the largest sources of climate alarmism" operating in the country.[1] This followed severe personnel and budget cuts across agencies such as the NOAA, NASA, and the EPA; all of which were deeply unpopular with voters.[2] More subtle but equally impactful moves included the termination of NSF funding for more than one hundred climate research projects,[3] as well as the gradual erasure of climate data from public websites.[4] These measures, some scientists worry, will have effects which endure far beyond near-term electoral cycles.[5]

This is not a uniquely American problem, either. Naturally, these US policy shifts have global impacts: on multinational academic projects,[6] on the IPCC,[7] and on downstream users of produced information.[8] Similarly, radical cuts to foreign aid and climate finance put direct adaptation and mitigation programmes at risk,[9] but also affect research institutions elsewhere in the world which rely on external funding.[10]

The connection between well-researched climate science and effective climate policy is clear.[11] This holds true for localised climate research too, wherein the contextualisation of variables, methods, and sampling allows for correspondingly contextualised results and recommendations, and creates wider opportunities for direct engagement with local decision-makers.[12] Sociological, historical, and anthropological studies of the climate are often undervalued against economic, political, legal, and

[1] Volcovici, Valerie. "Trump Administration to Dissolve Key Climate Research Agency." *Reuters*, 17 Dec. 2025.
[2] Kirk, Karin. "Trump's Climate Cuts Are Unpopular, Even with Republican Voters." *Yale Climate Connections*, 3 Jul. 2025.
[3] Temple, James. "The Trump Administration Has Shut Down More than 100 Climate Studies." *MIT Technology Review*, 2 Jun. 2025.
[4] Sethi, Pallavi. "Inside Trump's Campaign to Censor Climate Science." *Grantham Research Institute Commentary*, 5 Aug. 2025.
[5] "Axing Climate Research Endangers Americans, Say Former Officials." *Salata Institute News*, 5 May 2025.
[6] Klotz, Frieda. "The Impact of NIH Cuts Ripples Beyond U.S. Borders." *Undark*, 30 Jun. 2025.
[7] Voosen, Paul. "NASA Cuts Off International Climate Science Support." *ScienceInsider*, 24 Feb. 2025.
[8] Watkins, Andrew, et al. "As US Climate Data-Gathering Is Gutted, Australian Forecasting Is Now at Real Risk." *The Conversation*, 28 Jul. 2025.
[9] Shi, Xuefei, and Magnus Hatlebakk. "Assessment of the Impact of Aid Cuts on Climate and Nature Action." *WWF-CMI Report*, 8 Aug. 2025.
[10] Adepoju, Paul. "Q&A: Aid Cuts Call for African Self-Reliance in Research." *SciDev*, 17 Jun. 2025.
[11] According to the UNEP, bodies such as the IPCC, which synthesises climate research, "have played a vital role in ensuring better informed decisions and actions, with thousands of scientists and knowledge holders … working together to distil the latest research, evidence and policy options into reports accepted by governments around the world": "How Science-Policy Bodies Are Driving Solutions to Planetary Crises." *UN Environment Programme*, 19 Jun. 2024. Some commentators have suggested in the past that a stronger pipeline is needed between scientific outputs and policy recommendations: *see* Neff, Todd. "Connecting Science and Policy to Combat Climate Change." *Scientific American*, 17 Mar. 2009.
[12] Krabbe, Isabella. "Place-Based Approaches to Climate Change." *RTPI Research Paper*, Mar. 2021.

physical-scientific ones,[13] but they play an important role in interrogating the ways in which contemporary actors grapple with the concepts, norms, and principles which inform the production and implementation of climate policy, many of which are discursively or socially constructed.[14] All this is to say that the unprecedented systemic jeopardy which now faces the global climate research environment is not a concern merely for researchers but will have the substantive effect of weakening local, national, and international climate policy, thus enabling the continued deterioration of the climate system itself and the ecological holons which occupy it; it will seriously exacerbate the ongoing suffering of both people and planet.

How, then, is the climate research network to approach this issue?[15] My suggestion is to keep four informing values in mind.

The first is hope. It is easy, alluring even, to slip into defeatism when faced with challenges of this nature. In light of the unhappy but inevitable truth that successful climate research demands a monetary input, and often a very big one,[16] it is no wonder that researchers feel their reliance on institutions and grant bodies (themselves reliant on governments, NGOs, and IGOs) keenly. A disruption to a funding flow can be a disruption not only to a project but to a researcher's life, their control over their work, and their sense of impact and meaning. Optimism, however, is warranted. Notwithstanding the current environment, funding flows have grown over the last decade,[17] and as the public becomes increasingly climate-conscious,[18] there is no reason why in the long run this trend will not continue.

The second is drive. Drive is, I think, the rational operationalisation of hope. It is the ability to recognise where certain hurdles are insurmountable but to confine those hurdles to their proper limits and not allow their effect to escape those limits and prejudice other work programmes: to carefully divide doomed projects from those which can be reworked and continued. It also includes a capacity not to allow immediate obstacles to paralyse action where more distant opportunities remain open. Sometimes there genuinely is only one option, and when it is closed off, that is the end of the story. Climate research, however, is somewhat distinct in that it is undergirded by an array of sources of support which are smaller, community-led, often more difficult to find, but underutilised nonetheless.[19]

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[13] Bjurström, Andreas, and Merritt Polk. "Physical and Economic Bias in Climate Change Research: A Scientometric Study of IPCC Third Assessment Report." *Climatic Change*, vol. 108, 2011, pp. 1-22.
[14] Blue, Gwendolyn. "Framing Climate Change for Public Deliberation: What Role for Interpretive Social Sciences and Humanities?" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2016, pp. 67-84.
[15] Perhaps aside from transitioning into politics and advocating on behalf of climate research as a political agent, which might well be an effective way to go about it.
[16] Sovacool, Benjamin, et al. "Critically Examining Research Funding Patterns for Climate Change and Human Health." *NPJ Climate Action*, vol. 3, 2024, 64.
[17] Aleixandre-Tudó, José Luis, et al. "Trends in Funding Research and International Collaboration on Greenhouse Gases: A Bibliometric Approach." *Environmental Science & Pollution Research*, vol. 28, 2021, pp. 32330-32346.
[18] Hamilton, Lawrence. "Public Awareness of the Scientific Consensus on Climate." *SAGE Open*, 2016; Kenny, John, and Stephen Fisher. "Europeans' Climate Consciousness: Increased Yet More Politicised." *Environmental Politics*, 2025.
[19] Creamer, Emily. "The Double-Edged Sword of Grant Funding: A Study of Community-Led Climate Change Initiatives in Remote Rural Scotland." *Local Environment*, vol. 20, no. 9, 2015, pp. 981-999; Cann, Katherine, et al. "Building Equitable Research Partnerships: Learning from a Community Climate Resilience Grant Program." *Community Science*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2024; North, Michelle, et al. "Tracing Primary Sources of Funding for, and Patterns of Authorship in, Climate Change Research in Africa." *Environmental Science & Policy*, vol. 127, 2022, pp. 196-208.

The third is novelty. Without an innovative spirit, climate researchers may be unable to guide their projects through the extraordinary problems created by this extraordinary situation. Without falling, I hope, into grandstanding, I would like to highlight the *CJCR* itself as an example of that kind of innovation. Established at the end of 2023 by a group of postgraduate and undergraduate students in Cambridge as a response to the departmental siloes in our University which prevented interdisciplinary climate research almost entirely, it has grown into a truly international publication whilst retaining the open and critical ethos which motivated its genesis and animated its first issue. We are diamond open-access, meaning that we charge no fees to either authors or readers, such that the process for determining what works are published is based on merit alone, without regard to the affiliation or career stage of the author, their resources, or even the field of study. We are proud to have published exceptional pieces from eminent established professors, first-year undergraduates, and everyone in between. This kind of broad-minded receptivity embodies the reshaped practices which publishers of climate research will have to embrace to adapt to severe financial pressures. It is also a bilateral receptivity: researchers may have to come to terms with publishing in newer, less prestigious, or alternative spaces to ensure that studies are viable and to keep each project lifecycle roughly on track.

The fourth is charity. The current paradigm may require all actors in the climate research environment to make concessions on certain stringent demands so that the environment itself can survive these short-run stresses. In other words, both myopia and ordinarily legitimate self-interest will only lead to self-destruction. To use the *CJCR* as an example once again, we benefit enormously from our partnership with the Cambridge University Library, by virtue of which we host the *Journal* on a DSpace platform loosely based on the University's institutional repository, Apollo. This allows us to run a zero-cost business model for the electronic version of the *Journal*, which in turn enables us to keep it diamond open-access. These partnerships are also becoming more common in other fields. One fascinating case-study is the mass resignation of the Board of *Critical Public Health*, published by Taylor & Francis, to establish the *Journal of Critical Public Health*, hosted by the University of Calgary on a diamond open-access DSpace platform very similar to the Cambridge University Library's.[20] The generosity of these platform hosts cannot be overstated, and it represents exactly the kind of charity which the climate research environment requires now more than ever.

With these four values in mind, I am confident climate research will continue to thrive, even in the face of such profound perils.

A Personal Farewell to the *CJCR*

This is my last issue as Editor-in-Chief of the *CJCR*. I was one of the Founding Editors who came together in the Cambridge Climate Society in December 2023 with a clear ambition in mind. Under the learned guidance of the Founding Editor-in-Chief, Chibuzor Ndubisi, then studying for his MPhil in the Department of Engineering, we established the *Journal* and published our first issue in May 2024, at which point I took over leadership from Chibuzor. Two years on, we have published four

[20] Bunton, Robin, et al. "Manifesto for a New Journal: Safeguarding Critique in Public Health." *Journal of Critical Public Health*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2024, pp. 1-4.

issues, including this one, across two volumes. We have created print versions for the first two, and set up a storefront to sell them, with the other two still to come. We have published excellent and impactful research from all around the world and have seen growing readership and engagement.

This role has been the greatest privilege of my life. I must confess, managing a publication like this is very consuming indeed, and it has occupied much of my free time. Nonetheless, I have been devoted to the *CJCR* from the very start, and I have poured my heart and soul into it. Passing it on to a new Board is a sorrowful moment indeed, but I have the utmost faith in my successors' ability to take the *Journal* to new and exciting heights.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I have a few acknowledgements I must articulate before inviting you to enjoy this wonderful issue and signing off. First, I am endlessly grateful to the other members of the Editorial Boards which have stewarded the *CJCR* over the past two years. Chibuzor Ndubisi, Liniet Gitonga, Maja Glavin, Kilian Bartsch, Tamara Zambiasi, Manav Divecha, Lakshmi Rasipuram-Balakrishanan, Isabella Dressel, Siang Ern Lek, Apoorva Aladalli, Sara Uddin Nasrat, and Md Abu Toha—I could not have done any of this without your support, expertise, and enormous commitment to this shared endeavour. Special thanks to Tamara and Manav, who served as Senior Editors for the past year, and whose support was invaluable; and to Taylor Edgar, our Cover Illustrator, who is both a dear friend and a talented artist. Second, I must reiterate my immense appreciation for Open Research Systems Team at the Cambridge University Library, particularly Agustina Martínez García and Peter Sutton-Long, without whom this entire project would have been virtually impossible from the get-go. Third, I thank our wonderful Foreword authors, Prof Sir David King, Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger, Prof Mike Hulme and Prof Marie Edmonds, who offered their valuable time and visionary insights to introduce each issue. Fourth, the Cambridge Climate Society, which has officially published the *CJCR* since its inception, and the Society leadership over the years—Aman Vernekar, Beth Doherty, Shreya Patel, Benedetta Radice, Niklas Todt, and Lea Milanini—have been the guardians of our ethos and spirit. Fifth, all of the readers of our articles, to whom we hope we have been of some use. Finally, the most crucial element of any successful periodical: the authors themselves, who have submitted their outstanding contributions, tolerated our exacting and intensive review process, and agreed to entrust their works to a fledgling publication. Thank you all for your indispensable commitment to this collective venture.

My best wishes to my successors, and may climate research continue to thrive, so that we may all retain a spark of optimism that this world can yet be saved.

Kaden Pradhan, Editor-in-Chief, *Cambridge Journal of Climate Research*