



**DESMOG**

## **Where Are the Ring-Leaders of the Manufactured Climategate Scandal Now?**

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Ten years ago, leading climate scientists at the University of East Anglia had a mass of email correspondence stolen from their computers and broadcast around the world, in what became known as ‘Climategate’.

Climate science deniers pounced on the leaked emails as supposed proof that scientists were manipulating data and creating panic about climate change out of nothing.

The email release was deliberately timed to sow doubt ahead of the United Nations climate summit in Copenhagen, which ended in disappointment when countries failed to come to an agreement on curbing emissions. Saudi Arabia’s lead climate negotiator at the talks even claimed that the correspondence showed there was “no relationship whatsoever between human activities and climate change”.

Multiple inquiries were conducted and no evidence of scientific malpractice was found — though the scientists in question received some criticism for not being completely transparent around their data and methodologies.

Public trust in climate science was shaken, with a series of scientists’ quotes stripped of context and used to cast aspersions on their integrity.

While the identity of the hackers is still unknown, there was a very public effort by long-time climate science deniers, particularly in the UK and US, to make the most of the controversy and weaken trust in the science.

Some have gone on to become prominent advisors to those in government. Others have been forced to the fringes of the blogosphere.

So, who were Climategate’s ringleaders, and where are they now?

**UK**

**James Delingpole**

James Delingpole was one of the first journalists to write about the hacked emails and was credited with coining the term “Climategate”, though he has since admitted he came across it in the comments section of a climate sceptic blog.

In an article for the British newspaper The Telegraph, for which he was blogging, he said the emails had caused the “conspiracy behind the Anthropogenic Global Warming myth” to be “suddenly, brutally and quite deliciously exposed”.

He predicted the episode would deal a “blow to the AGW lobby's credibility from which it is never likely to recover”, calling it a “Berlin Wall moment” for climate sceptics in a post on his website.

In the intervening years, Delingpole has continued to claim that there is “no convincing evidence” that the climate is warming “in ways which are dangerous or unprecedented”.

He has also been a vocal opponent of wind energy in the UK and was involved in a plan in 2012 to push the issue up the political agenda by standing against the Conservative MP Chris Heaton-Harris — himself a prominent critic of renewable energy.

Since 2014, Delingpole has been executive editor of the London branch of the alt-right website *Breitbart* and regularly writes for the *Spectator* magazine, where he recently described his reporting on Climategate as his “finest hour”.

### **Christopher Booker**

Christopher Booker passed away in July 2019. For decades he was one of the UK’s most prominent climate science deniers, writing regular columns for The Telegraph.

Booker saw the emails as evidence of a great conspiracy among climate scientists, calling it the “greatest scientific scandal of our age”. He said the accused scientists were “trying to manipulate data through their tortuous computer programmes, always to point in only the one desired direction — to lower past temperatures and to ‘adjust’ recent temperatures upwards, in order to convey the impression of an accelerated warming”.

Just a month before Climategate, Booker had published a book called *The Great Global Warming Disaster*, which has been dubbed a “definitive guide for sceptics”.

The following month, Booker accused the then head of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of making a “fortune from his links with 'carbon trading' companies,” representing a conflict of interest with his IPCC position. After an independent audit found this to be untrue, the newspaper was forced to apologise and retract the article.

Booker continued to write columns casting doubt on the threat of climate change for a decade after Climategate, last year describing the idea the UK’s summer heatwave was linked to climate change as “hot air” in an article for the Daily Mail. “We shall continue to have abnormally hot summers from time to time, just as we did in 1976 and 1846, way back before global warming was invented,” he concluded.

He also wrote a report for the UK's principal climate science denial group the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) that characterised the scientific consensus on climate change as "groupthink". An article based on the report was published by *CapX*, a news and opinion site run by the Thatcherite think tank, the Centre for Policy Studies, which is based in offices next door to the GWPF on Tufton Street, in Westminster, London.

### **Graham Stringer**

Labour MP Graham Stringer was a member of the House of Commons' Science and Technology Committee at the time and was part of an investigation into the hacked emails launched by the committee the following year.

Highly sceptical of the climate scientists, Stringer pushed for a more critical final government report on the incident and later wrote that the "work done at [the University of East Anglia's] Climatic Research Unit barely qualified as science".

The inquiry found that "accusations of dishonesty against CRU" were unfounded but acknowledged that climate scientists needed to "become more transparent by publishing raw data and detailed methodologies".

Stringer has since been a leading supporter of Brexit in the Labour party, serving on the board of the official Vote Leave campaign and subsequently backing the Leave Means Leave pressure group, co-founded by Brexit Party chairman Richard Tice.

He joined the board of the UK's principal climate science denial campaign group, the Global Warming Policy Foundation, in 2015.

### **Nigel Lawson**

Former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Nigel Lawson, had just founded the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) when the scientists' emails were released and quickly called for a public inquiry.

He said in a statement that the integrity of climate science had been "called into question" and the reputation of British science "seriously tarnished" by the email hack. Lawson gave evidence to the parliamentary investigation launched the following year, alongside GWPF director Benny Peiser.

Since then, the GWPF has continued to cast doubt on the threat of climate change and lobby against action to cut emissions.

Lawson, who stepped down as Chairman of the group at the start of this year but remains its Honorary President, has frequently been the subject of complaints to the BBC for misleading statements about climate change.

He has also played a leading role in the Brexit campaign, chairing the official Vote Leave campaign during the 2016 EU referendum.

### **Andrew Montford**

Andrew Montford, a writer and retired accountant, was commissioned by the Global Warming Policy Foundation to conduct an inquiry of their own into Climategate. The output was 'GWPF Report 1'.

Montford was paid £3,000 for his services and the GWPF released the results in September, 2010. He has been Deputy Director of the group since 2017.

Three enquiries in the UK, one by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, one an independent panel chaired by Lord Oxburgh, and an independent review led by Sir Muir Russell, had all exonerated the scientists of any scientific misconduct before the GWPF conducted its enquiry.

According to Montford's own report, the other three inquiries were “rushed, cursory, and largely unpersuasive.” Although two known climate science deniers had been involved — Labour MP Graham Stringer and engineering professor Michael Kelly — Montford criticised the inquiries' lack of climate “sceptics” on their panels.

Discussing his report, he admitted he was “partisan in this argument” but argued it should not, however, be dismissed.

Since Climategate, Montford has written reports claiming children are being brainwashed about climate change in schools and that a recent David Attenborough documentary was an “eight-part, multi-million pound fundraiser” for the environmental organisation WWF.

## **Roger Tattersall**

Roger Tattersall is the author of the blog Tallbloke's Talkshop and was one of the first four blogs to receive a link to the hacked emails.

Tattersall has referred to the mysterious person(s) who released the stolen East Anglia emails as “our old friend FOIA,” although he claims he doesn't know the hacker's identity.

According to his blog, police seized some of his computers in 2011 but he was not considered a suspect by the following year.

Anthony Watts later lauded Tattersall's blog for being “The first blogger to break the Climategate2 story”, a second wave of email releases in 2011.

Like many others involved in Climategate, Tattersall has since been heavily involved in campaigning for Brexit, working as Assistant Director of Vote Leave, as well as for Grassroots Out and Leave Means Leave.

He was a prospective parliamentary candidate for the UK Independence Party for the 2015 election and a “West Yorkshire Organiser” for The Brexit Party earlier this year.

He is also currently Chief Executive of a fringe group called Clexit (Climate Exit), formed shortly after the UK's decision to leave the EU and whose founding statement reads: “The world must abandon this suicidal Global Warming crusade. Man does not and cannot control the climate.”

## **US and Canada**

### **Anthony Watts**

Anthony Watts is a retired TV meteorologist who founded the popular sceptics' blog Watts Up With That (WUWT), where he was among the first to publish extracts of the emails. He is also behind surfacestations.org, a website questioning the validity of the surface temperature record.

Since the initial release of emails in November 2009, WUWT has published no less than 385 posts on Climategate, including coverage of the so-called "Climategate 2.0" where additional emails retained from the first hacking were later released.

Watts was involved in a document leak of his own in 2012. His name cropped up in a leaked fundraising strategy from the fossil fuel-funded think tank the Heartland Institute, which outlined how it pledged to raise \$88,000 for a new website for Watts.

In 2019, Watts officially joined the Heartland Institute as a senior fellow.

### **Patrick J. Michaels**

Patrick Michaels was a Senior Fellow in Environmental Studies at the libertarian think tank the Cato Institute at the time of the email release and appeared on both Fox News and CNN to discuss Climategate in the following days.

He was quoted as saying: "This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud."

The Cato Institute later boasted that Michaels had appeared in the media more than 150 times since the initial release of emails and "has quickly become the most recognized face decrying the obstructionism of global warming alarmists."

The think tank has been closely-tied to the Koch family since it was founded by Charles Koch in 1977 and has received over \$20 million over the years from related foundations.

Michaels later became director of the Cato Institute's "Center for the Study of Science" but left earlier this year following disagreement over the think tank's focus. Cato subsequently closed the center.

In 2010, Michaels faced his own controversy when a trove of documents from a 2007 court case revealed he had significant ties to big energy interests, as Mother Jones reported, "ties that he's worked hard to keep secret."

Michaels is currently a Senior Fellow at the fossil fuel-funded Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) and recently joined the CO2 Coalition, a group that emerged out of the now-defunct George C. Marshall Institute and headed by prominent climate science denier William Happer.

### **Steve McIntyre & Ross McKittrick**

Steve McIntyre is the founder of Climate Audit, another of the initial websites to receive a link to the hacked emails. McIntyre's background is in the mining industry, having worked as an officer or director of numerous companies.

Ross McKittrick is a close colleague of McIntyre, and an economics professor in Guelph, Ontario, as well as a Senior Fellow at the Koch-funded Fraser Institute.

Before the leak, McIntyre had spent years filing or coordinating dozens of Freedom of Information requests to climate scientists at East Anglia, with the pace escalating significantly in the months leading up to the leak.

McIntyre and McKittrick have regularly co-authored papers and were given an award by the Competitive Enterprise Institute for their work on Climategate.

Watts wrote at the time:

“Much of Climategate involves research initially called into doubt by the analysis of Stephen McIntyre and Ross McKittrick. The scientists involved in the scandal saw McIntyre and McKittrick as major threats to global warming orthodoxy and to their own credibility. Consequently, they are mentioned more than 150 times in the ClimateGate e-mails.”

Both McIntyre and McKittrick have spoken at Heartland Institute conferences since Climategate. In a Heartland podcast earlier this year hosted by Anthony Watts, McKittrick claimed that increasing carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere could provide a net benefit to agriculture.

### **Myron Ebell**

Myron Ebell is Director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the fossil fuel-funded Competitive Enterprise Institute and was one of the most prominent voices in the media discussing Climategate.

In a statement on Climategate, Ebell said:

“It is clear that some of the ‘world’s leading climate scientists,’ as they are always described, are more dedicated to promoting the alarmist political agenda than in scientific research. Some of the emails that I have read are blatant displays of personal pettiness, unethical conniving, and twisting the science to support their political position.”

He later appeared on Fox News to debate climate scientist Kevin Trenberth, whose emails were among those hacked.

In the interview, Ebell claimed the scientists were “cooking the data ... And cooking is a technical term which means manipulating and falsifying the data.”

“These people have already been revealed as not having any honor. Now they’re being revealed as not having a sense of shame,” he said.

In 2016, Ebell led Donald Trump’s transition team at the Environmental Protection Agency. He held a press conference in London in 2017, hosted by the Global Warming Policy Foundation, in which he said Brexit was an “opportunity” to shed environmental regulations. He continues to

chair the Cooler Heads Coalition, a group of organisations “that question global warming alarmism and oppose energy rationing policies” and have been credited with helping to persuade Trump to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement.