

Independent Climate Change E-mails Review

Notes of Discussion with Professor Edward Acton, Vice-Chancellor

Review Team members: Sir Muir Russell & David Eyton

At UEA, 26 March 2010.

Background

1. Sir Muir Russell and David Eyton briefly summarized progress on the Review. The terms of reference required the Review to consider among other things management and governance structures and that had been the main focus of the day's sequence of interviews. The purpose of this discussion was to clarify a number of handling and timing issues.

Oxburgh Review

2. We explained that we had no quarrel with the intention that the Oxburgh Review and CCER should be entirely independent of each other. It appeared that Lord Oxburgh was of the view that his review was concerned not with the question of whether CRU's conclusions are correct, but whether they have been arrived at honestly. We expressed concern that this could be perceived to overlap with the CCER remit, as it related to alleged manipulation or suppression of data, leading to the possibility of embarrassment if the two reviews came to different conclusions. We noted that the specific allegations made in submissions to CCER would be posted on our website. It seemed to the CCER Team that it was important for Lord Oxburgh to be aware of this, not least because he appeared to be planning to report well before CCER would have come to conclusions on these matters. Professor Acton saw no need for action other than to ensure that Lord Oxburgh was aware of the issues that would be identified on the CCER website.

UEA Conference

3. We noted that UEA were planning a conference in London on an environmental theme. Professor Acton told us that part of the objective was to project UEA's significant commitment to environmental science, whatever position was reached on CRU. We expressed the concern that this should not be presented in a way that could imply that UEA had reason to believe that CCER would be delivering a favourable report. We suggested that it might be easier to convey the right message if any announcement was made before either Oxburgh or CCER had reported.

CRU Submission to CCER

4. We told Professor Acton that the CRU submission would be posted on our website along with others. There could be no question of delaying it, even if it might precipitate further representations. He accepted that.

Searching the CRU Server

5. We explained that we were considering whether it would be practicable to have some work done to search the CRU server (held by the police) with a view to obtaining a fuller understanding of the basis of the selection of the e-mails that were the subject of the unauthorized release. Professor Acton was strongly supportive. He was concerned that due attention be given to the fact that this could raise Data Protection issues because more personal data, possibly relating to more people, might be involved; and the sheer practical burden of handling the possible outputs of the work had to be considered. We agreed to reflect on those concerns and return to the matter, possibly with a more focused proposition, when Jim Norton and I made our next visit the following week.

Our Report

6. We noted the suggestion that the Team should give UEA notice of the report. We said that we accepted that the University must be warned of any serious criticisms, but expressed doubts about the feasibility of more than a fairly brief period of notice, given the potential for the Review's independence to be challenged.

Muir Russell

5 May 2010