

December 10, 2011 2:05 am

## Putting trust in science at risk

*From Prof Roger Pielke.*

Feedback?

Sir, Bob Ward's letter (December 3) explains that the unauthorised publication of emails from the University of East Anglia "simply" shows scientists expressing frustration at the irrationality of political debates. Unfortunately, the emails cannot be explained away so innocently. For instance, one exchange shows two lead authors of the 2007 assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) conspiring to keep peer-reviewed research that I had led from being cited in their chapter on extreme events. Our work had challenged their views on the subject of hurricanes and climate change.

This exchange, and others, revealed scientists in influential positions exhibiting an unhealthy orientation toward influencing political debates as well as making decisions about science based on rather petty academic rivalries. Of course, such dynamics are always a risk when science meets politics, which is why major scientific assessments are, in principle, designed to minimise the outsized influence of a small clique of contributors.

As Christopher Caldwell ("Why Climategate is a catastrophe for good science", November 26) explained in the column to which Mr Ward was responding, trust in science is a matter of the credibility and legitimacy of scientific organisations that represent the authority of science in public settings. Denial of the troubling issues raised by the emails – as Mr Ward has done – will not make the problems of the IPCC go away, much less contribute to renewed trust in the institutions of climate science.

**Roger Pielke, Jr, Professor, Environmental Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, US**

Printed from: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cd20294a-2000-11e1-8662-00144feabdc0.html>

Print a single copy of this article for personal use. Contact us if you wish to print more to distribute to others.

© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2011 FT and 'Financial Times' are trademarks of The Financial Times Ltd.