From Andrew Miller MP, Chair

Dear Alan Rusbridger

I am writing to you, as Chair of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, with concerns about the article your paper published on Friday 28 November this year:


My Committee has been following Government policy and its use of risk and uncertainty over the whole of this Parliament. Risk and uncertainty is a crucial element of all government policy and we hope to ensure that Government properly addresses that in an open and transparent fashion, which often means publishing and accepting scientific evidence that may appear to be detrimental to its policies.

I know there is a push within the Guardian for the Government to be better at communicating its science, we heard that quite clearly during our inquiry into Communicating climate science. It is with some despair then to read your article that selectively picks out those elements within the report that might be best used to raise public concern and suggest that the scientific advice to the Government is against a particular policy. It is the same manner in which those sceptical of climate policy might pore through a 100 page scientific report looking for the one phrase or comment that they can use to criticise the science as a proxy for criticising the Government policy. Short term journalistic opportunism should not risk damaging the trend for the Government to experiment with a bit more transparency on their thinking on policy areas.

I consider your article to be opportunistic and misleading. It certainly does not represent the report that I read nor any of the views of the Government Chief Scientific Advisor that I have heard. A more sensible reporting of the report is available on the Sense about Science website.
After the sensible engagement we had with the Guardian, as opposed to some other UK media outlets, during our climate inquiry I had come to expect a better standard of journalism regarding science. I hope you can convince me that this is a one-off aberration.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Miller
Chair