



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on December 22, 2010

Severe Weather in Europe Stalls Travelers, Baffles Environmentalists

It's going to be a white Christmas at London's Heathrow Airport, with record low temperatures and snowfall canceling and delaying hundreds of flights. BAA Airports, Ltd., which operates Heathrow, announced on Tuesday, December 21 that it will function at one-third capacity until Thursday morning. With more adverse weather in the forecast, it is doubtful the airport will return to full service even then. Heathrow's website asks travelers not to come to the airport unless they have confirmed in advance that their flights are still scheduled.



The record-setting winter weather has ruined Christmas plans for millions of travelers in England and across northern Europe, and promises far-reaching economic consequences. [Reuters](#) reports 3,000 European flights were cancelled on Monday alone. Tour company [Gap Adventures](#) indicates that the delays are affecting travel between Europe and nearly 200 countries, causing many smaller nations to fall short of their 2010 tourism forecasts. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Air-France has already lost between €25 and €35 million this winter due to weather-related problems.

The delays have prompted criticism from the European Commission, which claims airport operators should be better prepared to cope with harsh winter weather. The *Wall Street Journal* quotes the commission's transport policy chief, Siim Kallas, promising stricter regulations if airports do not "get serious" about preventing further problems:

We have seen in recent years that snow in Western Europe is not such an exceptional circumstance. Better preparedness ... must be planned for and with the necessary investment.

Perhaps European airports have been taking their cues from the Met Office, the United Kingdom's National Weather Service, which predicted mild winters for the past three years in a row — each of which three winters actually broke severe weather records. Consider the following forecasts from the Met Office:

September 2008: "It is, once again, likely to be milder than average. It is also likely that the coming winter will be drier than last year." Yet the Met Office reported the following spring that the [winter of 2008/09](#) was "the coldest winter since 1996/97" and "0.5°C below average."

February 2009: "Despite the cold winter this year, the trend to milder and wetter winters is expected to continue, with snow and frost becoming less of a feature in the future." However, in March 2010, the Met Office reported "the (2009/10) UK winter has been the coldest since 1978/79."

[July 2010](#): "The effect of climate change is to gradually but steadily reduce the probability of severe winters in the UK." As recently as late October it published estimates of a 60 to 80 percent chance of warmer-than-average winter temperatures. But once again, Mother Nature served crow as the



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Met Office announced in [mid-December](#), "It is likely that December 2010 will indeed be the coldest since the national record began in 1910."

These repeated contradictions prompted Ross Clark to lament in London's [Daily Express](#), "One reason we have been so unprepared for the past three winters has been the obsession of our government and other authorities with global warming."

In response to the outrageous errors, the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) is calling for an independent inquiry by the government. "The current winter fiasco is no longer a joke as the economic damage to the British economy as a result of the country's ill-preparedness is running at £1 billion a day and could reach more than £15 billion," declared GWPF Director Dr. Benny Peiser. He contends that the Met Office should explain why its computer modeling has failed for three winters in a row, what its errors have cost the public, and how it plans to change its calculations to avoid future debacles. GWPF also questions whether it is appropriate for the chairman of the Met Office to belong to climate pressure groups or carbon trading groups, or for senior Met Office staff to advocate political action to tackle climate change.

The Met Office works closely with the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, which made headlines last year at the center of "[Climategate](#)." That scandal revealed many researchers in Britain involved in an apparent cover-up of climate data to forward their own climate-change agenda. Their research has heavily influenced regularly published "Assessment Reports" by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which greatly influence environmental policies and government regulations around the world, including the U.S. and Canada.

Photo: Passengers queue as they wait to check-in for their flights outside Terminal 3 of Heathrow Airport in London, Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2010: AP Images



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