

= Planet Relief =

Planet Relief was a proposed BBC television special dealing with the issue of global warming , originally scheduled for broadcast in January 2008 . The programme , which had been in development for 18 months , was meant to be similar to previous BBC programmes such as Comic Relief and Sport Relief . However , it was cancelled before it was broadcast , allegedly because the BBC was concerned that it would be " biased " towards promoting responses based on acceptance of mainstream climate change science .

= = Concept = =

The original idea for Planet Relief was to increase awareness of climate change . The show , unlike previous BBC specials such as Comic Relief , was not planned to be a charity event , but to increase awareness , similar to Live Earth . It was mainly inspired by Live 8 , with Planet Relief seen as its climate change counterpart . The programme would have involved an electric power station being shut down for one night , for which the BBC had spent over a year negotiating , urging viewers " to turn off all unnecessary lights and electric gadgets for the evening . " People reported to have been involved with the show included comedians Ricky Gervais and Graham Norton , entertainment personality Jonathan Ross , the head of BBC comedy Jon Plowman and environmental expert Matt Prescott . Dr Matt Prescott 's years of experience within ecology and planet conservation helped him to become the professional guidance to spearhead the campaign 's concept .

= = Cancellation = =

The BBC scrapped the idea for Planet Relief on 5 September 2007 . Peter Barron , editor of Newsnight said , " It is absolutely not the BBC 's job to save the planet . " Peter Horrocks , head of BBC television news said , " It is not the BBC 's job to lead opinion or proselytise on this or any other subject . " There were also concerns that the power station shutdown " might overload parts of the [electricity distribution] network . " The BBC did not , however , say that the show was cancelled due to bias , stating rather that , " The BBC is committed to programmes about climate change but after Live Earth what audiences say is they are looking for programmes of a documentary or factual nature to explain the complex subject . "

Right wing commentators opposed the idea of Planet Relief , including Keith Waterhouse who said in the Daily Mail before the show was cancelled that , " If the idea is still developing , we can only hope it gets lost in the darkroom . Heaven knows Comic Relief is puerile and patronising enough . Can you imagine what Cosmic Relief ? in fact , they 're toying with calling it Planet Relief , on which note I can only warn readers of a nervous disposition to avoid any enterprise containing the word Planet ? is going to be like ? "

Complaints about the programme also came from climate sceptics such as Martin Durkin , who said , " The thing that disturbs me most is that the BBC has such a leviathan position ? that if it decides that it is going to adopt climate change as a moral purpose , I have got a lot of trouble with that . I don 't think it is the role of the BBC to spend my money on a moral purpose . "

For their part , climate change activists attacked the BBC for cancelling the programme . Author Mark Lynas said , " This decision shows a real poverty of understanding among senior BBC executives about the gravity of the situation we face . The only reason why this became an issue is that there is a small but vociferous group of climate ' sceptics ' lobbying against taking action , so the BBC is behaving like a coward and refusing to take a more consistent stance . "

Another critic , Friends of the Earth executive director Tony Juniper , said , " This is a very disappointing decision considering the huge potential for the BBC in helping us more quickly make the shift toward a low @-@ carbon society . The science of climate change is very clear and if approached in the right way taking up this very serious issue would not compromise the BBC ' impartiality . "