Reporting on Climate Repair: a tear sheet for journalists

🧠 William Lamb's checklist for responsible media coverage

Good reporting on carbon removal should:

🟩 Highlight the need to reduce emissions alongside removal.
🟩 Highlight where emissions come from.
🟩 Make clear that removal is not a substitute for reductions — and that cutting emissions comes first.
🟩 Avoid unconditional support or rejection.
🟩 Acknowledge that no single solution can fix climate change.
🟩 Identify and discuss risks.
🟩 Identify and discuss benefits.
🟩 Avoid confusing removal with offsets or avoided emissions.
🟩 Avoid confusing removal with carbon capture (which stores carbon not drawn from the atmosphere).
🟩 Avoid confusing removal with solar radiation modification.

💬 Bellamy & Raimi's four-point guide to effective communication

1. Be clear. Use accessible language and analogies, but clarify how carbon removal differs from related processes.
2. Be specific. Avoid "nature-based" or "natural" framing; refer to individual methods or precise scientific terms.
3. Be accurate. Emphasise that removals must complement, not replace, emissions reductions.
4. Be social. Explain the governance and social arrangements, not only the technology itself — showing the alternative paths implementation could take.

Questions to ask:

Can the project scale meaningfully?
Would it require, for example, sprinkling rock dust across a land area twice the size of Europe – or kelp growing around the entire coast of the Americas?

What are the costs or side effects?
Consider energy, water, land, transport, and waste-disposal demands.
Note: Early proof-of-concept projects have costs that may not reflect long-term realities, once economies of scale apply.

What are the benefits?
Will the project restore a landscape, cool a coral reef, or remove measurable carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

How are results being measured — and by whom?
Is an independent measurement agency involved, or is the company self-reporting its results?

How are potential environmental impacts tracked?
Did the project take baseline measurements — showing what an environment was like before a new chemical or technology was added?

What do local communities think?
What kind of input do residents have?
Is the relationship between project and public two-way dialogue or one-way communication?

Who is funding the project?
What are the timelines, imperatives, and incentives? Is it funded by the sale of carbon-removal credits, and if so, how are those credits accounted for?

How is the project governed?
Who makes decisions about when the project starts or ends, and how it is run?

Compiled by Rebekah White, 2025. Based on original research and interviews for *The non-scientist's guide to reporting on climate repair*