Reviewer #1 (Kate Donovan)

This is a well written and designed paper that speaks to an important area for reflection. Our roles as both scientists, concerned advocates for climate action and our roles as government's trusted friends. These are extremely challenges paths to tread, especially if you have to tread them all.

We thank the reviewer for these positive general comments on our study!

I would have liked to have seen more of a discussion bringing these findings back to a wider academic literature on science for evidence informed policy making and how this research sits in the wider context of mis and disinformation, the dismantling of science in some countries, and the concerns over the future of climate and environmental policy making.

This is a good point by the reviewer. We now start our introduction with a sentence on how our work relates broader societal developments in science communication, such as misinformation: "*Climate scientists navigate an increasingly complex landscape as they seek to communicate their science to broader audiences. In doing so, they face challenges related to: 1) common barriers to public engagement (e.g., lack of time and fear of failure); 2) difficulties in translating highly complex scientific knowledge into accessible messages; 3) societies in which climate skepticism, misinformation, and harassment of scientists flourish; and, finally, 4) debates over whether scientists may, in fact, be considered 'activists' (van Eck, 2023).*" (lines 24-28 in the track-changed pdf)

However, as our interviewees did not allude to the other aspects in the interviews, we don't revisit them in the Discussion section.

I suggest that a final reflection brings in wider literature and embeds these findings from Danish perspective into the wider discourse on the role of science for policy making and the current trends in geopolitics and perhaps provides an indication to whether this is a Danish perspective or one that has lessons for other countries? Perhaps drawing on current discourse about scientists motivations and emotions in the climate space - would also elevate a final discussion section.

We agree with the reviewer that it would be very interesting to compare our findings in the Dutch context to those in other countries – but we are not aware of any other work. We have now added a sentence to the limitations section "*Therefore, we encourage that similar studies be done in other national, institutional, and policy contexts, where the boundary arrangements may be different*" (lines 334-335 of the track-changed pdf).

I am glad that authors flag that they were unable to really pull out trends relating to the various roles across boundary work, but this would have provided some useful insights contrasting those who worked in government funded institutes versus perhaps Universities where you might consider there is space for advocacy.

This is a good suggestion by the reviewer. We have now added a sentence to the Discussion section: "*Therefore, another relevant research avenue could be to investigate how individuals cross the boundary between academia and government – and what this means for their professional practice and communication*" (lines 295-298 of the track-changed pdf).

It would have also been good to see a discussion relating to how scientists do advocate but in the translation and knowledge exchange of research across policy lines. I would argue we do this by providing an evidence base for government to make informed decisions.

This is a good point by the reviewer. We have now added this point to the introduction section (underlined is new): "*Compared to researchers employed at universities, they operate in much closer proximity to policymaking processes, by providing an evidence base for governments to make informed decisions, which may amplify existing concerns about scientists abusing their position to influence policy decisions (Messling et al., 2025; Pielke Jr., 2007)*" (lines 47-48 of the track-changed pdf). Furthermore, we now also highlight the future research on contexts with different boundary arrangements (see points above).

Ultimately I really enjoyed reading this paper, and would have no issue it being published as is. If there is time and scope to address (even in a small way) my suggestions above that would be great. An interesting paper, on an important topic that is less discussed than it should be.

Again, we thank the reviewer for their very encouraging remarks and helpful suggestions!

Reviewer #2 (Courtney Jermyn)

This is a well-written and interesting paper addressing an important and underexplored issue: how researchers in government-funded knowledge organizations navigate their roles as scientists, civil servants and citizens in relation to climate advocacy. I particularly appreciated that the findings do not reduce participants to being either for or against advocacy, but instead show how independence, objectivity, credibility and responsibility can provide arguments both for and against engagement. Finding an appropriate balance in how climate-related science is communicated and how researchers engage with policymakers, political actors and the wider public is an important and timely challenge.

We thank the reviewer for these very positive comments on our study.

I would support publication, with a few suggestions that I think could strengthen the discussion and conceptual clarity:

Develop the proposed "value-based approach". The abstract suggests that researchers should delineate their roles and responsibilities more clearly, following a value-based approach, but I did not feel this was sufficiently developed in the Discussion. The findings provide a good basis to discuss what this might mean in practice, considering researchers' personal values, their roles as researchers/civil servants/private citizens, institutional expectations and scientific credibility. This could also include some reflection on the different ways researchers can contribute to society and policy, such as providing scientific evidence, policy advice, knowledge exchange, public communication or activism, and how these might be navigated within personal and institutional constraints.

This is a good point by the reviewer. We have now added a sentence "*Government-funded organizations could adopt a value-based perspective grounded in the philosophy of science to distinguish between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms of value influence in both their research (e.g., the formulation of research questions, choice of methods, and interpretation of findings) and their science communication (e.g., explicit policy advocacy, civil disobedience in lab coats), drawing on the fundamental concerns identified in the literature (Douglas, 2015; van Eck et al., 2024; Messling et al., 2025)*" (lines 341-345 of the track-changed pdf).

Clarify the terminology around advocacy and activism. The distinction between advocacy and activism is not always clearly maintained throughout the paper, with some activities appearing to be described under both terms. A brief definition of these terms and their relationship to the broader concept of engagement would strengthen the conceptual framing and ensure their consistent use throughout the manuscript.

In hindsight, we agree with the reviewer that we didn't clearly distinguish the terminology of activism and advocacy. In the revised manuscript, we explicitly state how we define advocacy: "*While we acknowledge that communicative acts may be perceived as advocacy depending on the messenger, audience, and context, here we follow Finnerty et al. (2026) to define advocacy as the "act of persuading or arguing in support of a specific cause, policy, idea, or set of values" (Pezzullo and Cox, 2022).*" (lines 35-38 of the track-changed pdf).

Furhermore, we have streamlined the terminology to only use advocacy, removing "and activism" from the title and other places in the manuscript.

Minor typographical error. In line 190, under Section 3.1.3, the sentence reads, "They **ought** it impossible to engage in advocacy…". I believe "ought" should be "**thought**".

We thank the reviewer for pointing out this type-o. We have now fixed it.

Overall, I found this to be a valuable and thought-provoking contribution on an important topic. These suggestions are primarily intended to help draw out the implications of the findings more fully and improve conceptual clarity. I do not see a need for fundamental changes to the study design.

We are very grateful to the reviewer for this warm and encouraging reflection.

The study also raises an interesting question for future research: whether similar tensions and considerations would be found across the broader landscape of research and knowledge organizations in the Netherlands, particularly in organizations with different relationships to government. This would provide an interesting opportunity to explore how different institutional contexts shape these considerations.

We fully agree with the reviewer. As mentioned also in our response R1, we have added the following future research suggestion: "*Therefore, we encourage that similar studies be done in other national, institutional, and policy contexts, where the boundary arrangements may be different*" (lines 334-335 of the track-changed pdf).