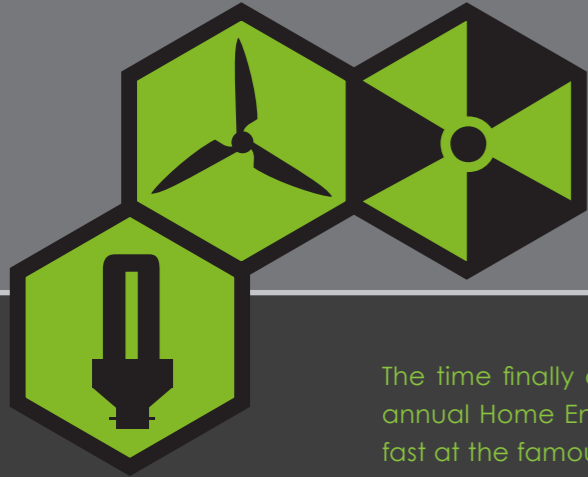


national home energy conference 2007



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fuelling the debate
 energy efficiency | renewables | nuclear power

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The time finally came when UK HECA stepped off Great Britain and held its annual Home Energy Conference in Northern Ireland. Set in the heart of Belfast at the famous Europa Hotel the venue proved an ideal location to attract delegates from across the UK and, with the assistance of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), we were able to showcase examples of energy efficiency and renewable projects in the area. To welcome delegates to Northern Ireland, a pre-conference networking event was held with live music from traditional Irish musicians.

Day one plenary

Invited Chairs Prof. John Cheshire and Baroness Maddock opened each day, respectively, welcoming an array of speakers, seminars and site visits. John set the ball rolling on the first day with an introduction by the Chair of UK HECA, Oliver Myers. Oliver was followed by Minister Margaret Richie whose key priorities as Social Development Minister for the Northern Ireland Assembly are eradicating fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency in Northern Ireland by renewables and the Warm Homes Scheme.

Paddy McIntyre, Chief Executive of the NIHE provided a welcome address, which was followed with an introduction to EST's segmentation tool by Noel Williams, Head of EST Northern Ireland. The tool uses a Mosaic model that identifies similar characteristics of householders from 24 million homes - such as background, belief, occupation, income, house, location etc - of which data has been divided into 11 groups, 61 types and 243 segments that can be used to iden-

tify appropriate channels when targeting a specific audience.

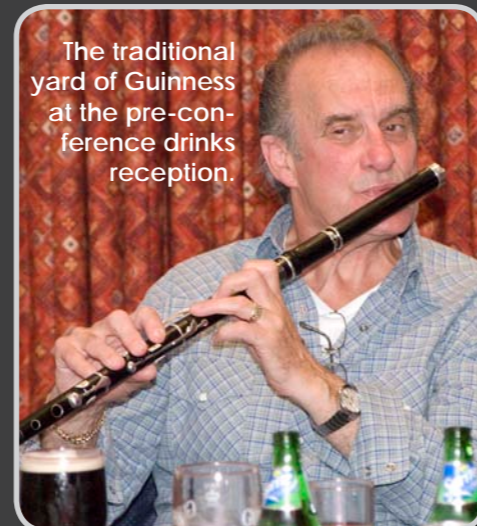
The first of the three debate speakers was John Gilliland, who is the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Commissioner (SDC). One of the SDC's roles is publishing evidence based public reports, an example of such was the recently published, "The role of nuclear power in a low carbon economy", which fitted into the debate theme. The report produced five guiding principals which concluded that nuclear power is not the answer to climate change or security of supply - renewables and efficient use of carbon fuels is. John provided examples of international best practice in incorporating energy efficiency and renewables such as a community build in Freiberg, Germany.

A break from the programme was an inspiring performance called "The Watts and the Saves" by class P6 of St. Peter's Primary School. The enchanting, and rather amusing play, highlighted the important message that saving energy saves money and the environment.

Back with the debate speakers and Dr Patrick Waterfield presented a project by John Willoughby on working towards zero carbon new homes by reducing carbon emissions with energy efficiency measures to obtain Government targets. Using a typical three bed semidetached house as an example,



Right to left:
 Professor John Cheshire, Stephen Stretton, John Gilliland OBE and Dr Patrick Waterfield taking part in the Conference debate session.



The traditional yard of Guinness at the pre-conference drinks reception.



Thanks to all of this year's Exhibitors!



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'The Big Fish' by John Kindness on Donegall Quay was one of the sites from the coach window on the east to west tour of some of Belfast's housing and community renewables installations.

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Patrick outlined how reducing carbon emissions with new highly efficient measures internally and outside construction methods can obtain low air permeability and fulfil Government targets

The last of the debate speakers was Stephen Stretton who represented Environmentalist for Nuclear Energy - an organisation supported by James Lovelock. He started by outlining the affects of climate change, then provided an insight into the contribution of nuclear energy towards the future energy mix bearing in mind the increasing demand on energy and the need for a zero carbon society. Nuclear fission does not produce carbon and the amount of energy produced is comparatively high to renewables such as wind turbines, and not affected by the weather. Some of the other pros Stephen mentioned were: the available range of reactors, compact sites and quick construction, low capital costs, less waste, competitive price with gas and coal (with carbon tax), no serious accidents recorded (in Europe), opportunity to meet Government targets and the possibility of recycling waste with new technologies. There are, of course, constraints, such as the lack of skilled workers, a need to overcome bad public perception and acceptability - where common criticisms include centralised energy, disposal of waste and availability of sites.

The debate

The hour-long debate on "Energy Efficiency/ Renewables/ Nuclear power" aimed to discuss the role of nuclear power in helping to meet the UK's future energy needs. Questions rose from the scene-setting presentations given earlier in the

day. A total of 26 questions were posed by the audience and some supplementary questions were taken from the floor. Due to time constraints, questions were categorised into similar themes. A full overview of the questions and answers is provided on the website, but some of the topics discussed include:

Can energy efficiency and renewables alleviate climate change without the need for nuclear power? How are nuclear production costs calculated? Can we afford to wait to make decisions on nuclear energy? What are the economic benefits of energy production methods? What are the constraints, and its affect, on uranium availability? What about new technology such as nuclear fusion?

Seminars and site visits

three site visits were introduction to the programme this year: A tour of local renewable social housing projects in Belfast, small scale renewable projects at Oxford Island nature reserve and a look around the Thermomax factory where solar panels are made for worldwide distribution. The tours also provided a fascinating insight into Belfast's history and a look at the local wildlife. The tours were so successful, we aim to include similar arrangements in future programmes.

Seminars ran at the same time as the site visits and offered the choice to attend two of the four seminars on offer, which included the HECA Review, EEC3/Intelligent metering, the Low Carbon Building Programme and Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre Northern Ireland showcase.



Noel Rice acts as tour guide on the road to the Oxford Island Nature Reserve, where delegates were shown the Visitor Centre's wind turbine, biomass boiler and PV panel (below).



The Buddy Scheme meeting was a chance to introduce first-time delegates to the Conference.

"Hi, I'm Steve from Wales and I'm looking for new buddies"



Swallow enjoying the weather and the Loch Neagh flies at the Oxford Island Visitor Centre.

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Evening, day one

As delegates met in the Library bar for pre-dinner drinks, the Grand Ballroom was being transformed into the setting for the annual Gala Dinner. Once seated, the Lord Mayor of Belfast welcomed guests with a short speech and invited everyone to party the Irish way!

After dinner was served, the HECA Awards were announced by Toastmaster John Davis. For the first time, all winners were in attendance at the event to collect their awards. The ceremony was followed by a team of Irish dancers from the Doherty Reid School of Dancing, including Gerard, who was recently crowned under 18's world champion. Comedian Gene Fitzpatrick followed with an amusing account of life in Ireland and then guests were serenaded by the Paul Dean band. The evening closed with a disco and hefty bar bill.

Second day plenary

As the main instigator of the Home Energy Conservation Act, Baroness Maddock was pleased that climate change is now high on government agenda. HECA officers play a key role and hopes that the raised awareness can move things forward and that local authorities will finally receive financial backing. Baroness Maddock went on to introduce the speakers for the second day which started with the keynote address by Brian Rowntree, chairperson of the NIHE.

Brian welcomed delegates and reiterated how pleased the NIHE are to host the Conference in Northern Ireland, especially at such a prominent time with the recent commencement of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Working with the Assembly, the NIHE will strive to improve energy efficiency and end fuel poverty making the city of Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland an exem-

plar not only the UK but in Europe.

Philip Sellwood, Chief Executive of EST, followed, presenting an overview of EST's activities - including the services on offer to assist local authority officers, information databases (HEED, WISE), free research time and scheme development/involvement.

Richard Davies gave an interactive presentation about community action on climate change discussing "Why should we?" to "How can we?" After asking the audience to prove how efficient they were, Richard made the serious point that we, the practitioners, need to practice what we teach. For a sustainable life, we need to educate the public by bringing local communities together. Working with small rural communities, the Low Carbon Community project identifies what a community needs and puts it in place. Another project is the Carbon Offsetting scheme, where carbon is offset by selling to the private sector, this in turn funds in-

stallations and any spare power is then sold back.

Catrin Maby provided a European dimension on energy advice with an overview about the SERENADE project, a partnership of European organisations carrying out research on energy advice. Partners are collecting information from advice centres across Europe to produce a toolkit that enables the set up of an energy advice centre using best practice aspects of advice centres.

Working in the health sector, Dr Passmore presented the links between health and energy efficiency, particularly looking at fuel poverty and the health implication on the older generation. Results from a recent study showed the health benefits of detection and intervention of fuel poverty cases. As the costs of treatment are alarming statistics, it shows there is a need for joined up thinking to prevent illnesses or mortality and reduced NHS costs.

Helen Atkins - UK HECA Secretariat



Dancers from the Doherty Reid School of Dancing entertaining the crowd at the Gala Dinner.



Conference Toastmaster John Davis teaching the hokey-cokey to Gerard, the under 18 World Irish Dancing Champion.



Second day Chair, Baroness Maddock, with speakers Richard Davies and Brian Rowntree (right)