WINTER PROGRAMME 2016-2017

This flier is announcing our first winter talk, in October. It is an afternoon talk in the Cults Kirk Centre. As last year, we are meeting jointly with the Rotary Club of Aberdeen Deeside, in particular with their members who have an engineering interest.

Title: "Nuclear Waste in Britain; Bury, Store or Ignore"

Speaker: Professor Brian D Clark MBE

Venue: Cults Kirk Centre, 404 North Deeside Road, Cults, Aberdeen AB15 9TD. The meeting room is “Bennachie”

Date: Tuesday 24th October, 2017
Time: 2.30 pm

Tea and coffee available in the Hub cafe from 2.00 pm

Guests of members and visitors welcome.

Background

When both civil and military nuclear waste was produced in post war Britain very little thought was given as to how highly radioactive waste should be disposed of. Indeed, the policy was to store it on site in various ways depending on whether it was defined as intermediate or high-level waste.

From the 1980’s onwards, a number of attempts were made to find sites for the geological disposal of the waste that could remain radioactive for up to a million years. Opposition came from those who felt that sites identified by the nuclear industry were totally unacceptable in their area and the last attempt to find a site at Longlands Farm in West Cumbria failed after what has been described as a totally incompetent technical case being made at a public enquiry.

At the start of the year 2000, the Government set up a process called "Managing Radioactive Waste Safely". After much deliberation in 2003 it was decided to set up an independent "Committee of Radioactive Waste Management“ (CoRWM) . This presentation will focus on the work of CoRWM and the 14 years that have elapsed since it started its activities and what the UK, Scottish Government and nuclear industry have attempted to do, albeit so far,
without any real success. The speaker was a member of CoRWM from 2003 to 2017 but does not accept the blame for the current state of play!

The presentation will consider how CoRWM, given a blank sheet of paper with the requirement to look at all options (including firing waste into space and burying in Antarctica) came to the conclusion after one of the UKs largest public and stakeholder consultation exercises, and input from nuclear waste experts, that deep geological disposal was the best option. This was accepted by the UK Government (but not the Scottish Government - to quote the Cabinet Secretary "Out of Site out of Mind") and a White Paper put the process into action with the proviso that it should be based on the principle of Voluntarism i.e. that communities could volunteer to explore hosting a deep geological disposal facility (GDF) based on a staged process with a Right to Withdraw (RoW) up to a certain stage and in so doing be handsomely rewarded for trying to solve a national problem.

The presentation will consider how Copeland DC and Allerdale DC in West Cumbria volunteered with indecent haste and then were joined by Cumbria CC and set up "The West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Process". After a massive scientific and consultation process the wishes of Copeland and Allerdale DCs to proceed were thwarted due to the veto of Cumbria CC causing angst to many but joy to the highly effective "anti" local and national NGOs.

Back to the drawing boards and a review of what went wrong has seen the UK Government produce a new consultation document proposing a modified process but again based on the principle of Voluntarism. This is due to be published soon but has been delayed due to the inconvenience of General Elections and Brexit. Key new features of this process, assuming what has been discussed and consulted on will be included in the pending White Paper, will be examined.

As we shall see, Scotland has gone its own way, proposing a policy of "Near Site, Near Surface Storage" which is slowly meandering its way through the corridors of power from policy formulation to possible implementation.

Whilst it may be a little unfair to include "Ignore" in the title of the presentation there are those, not least those vehemently hostile to a GDF, that consider that a project which will cost at least £100 billion and not see waste starting to be disposed for up to 60 or so years can be best ignored by paying superficial attention to it in the knowledge that progress has been slow and will continue to be so!

The speaker: Professor Brian D Clark MBE

Brian D Clark is a specialist in environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) with fifty years' experience in EIA and SEA, urban and rural planning and environmental management in Scotland, the UK, Europe and several developing countries. Initial research at Glasgow University was on regional development policy and mobility of industry in the UK and he was joint coordinator of the first study of urban deprivation in Scotland based on the inner suburbs of Glasgow. This was followed by an appointment at Durham University where he conducted research on urban and regional planning in Iran, Iraq and the Gulf States.
He moved to Aberdeen University in 1971 to direct the MSc in Rural and Regional Resources Planning which later became the MSc in Sustainable Rural Development. He established the Centre for Environmental Management and Planning (CEMP), which won national and international awards for consultancy, research and training in EIA, SEA, Sustainability and Environmental Management. In 1994, he was awarded a Personal Chair in Environmental Management and Planning. He has acted as an advisor and consultant on EIA, planning and environmental issues to the House of Lords, UK governments, UNEP, WHO, EU, UNECE and the World Bank. He was honoured in 1987 by being made a founder member of UNEP’s Global 500 Award for his services towards environmental management and awarded an MBE in 2006.

He was a Board Member of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), and Chairman of the North Region Board and the Planning & Finance Committee of SEPA from 2000 - 2008 and a Commissioner of the Scottish Government Local Boundary Commission. He has served on the UK government and Devolved Administrations Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM) from 2003 to 2017 and then retained as a technical advisor. He was a founder member of the Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA), now the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), and chaired its Technical Committee.

He was a Governor of The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute from 2004 and a Board Member of Macaulay Scientific Consulting until the establishment of the James Hutton Institute in 2012 when he became a Board member and Chair of the Advisory Committee on Science until 2017.

His outside interests are developing his croquet skills, putting croquet on the map in the North East of Scotland, supporting Aberdeen football club and buying obscure plants in the hope that one day they will get planted!

If you misplace this flier, see the AMS web page http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ams/winter.html.