

Chairman Neil Turner's Presentation at Environmental Protection UK
AGM 15th July 2010

Firstly and most importantly it gives me great pleasure in welcoming you all to the 112th Annual General meeting of the Society and to all those travelling from Wales – Pryhawn Da.

This year it is 112 years since Sir William Blake Richmond founded the Coal Smoke Abatement Society because he was frustrated at the low levels of light in winter caused by burning coal.

Since 1898 the Society in its various guises has been vigorously campaigning for reduction in pollution levels in air, noise and on land. This makes Environmental Protection UK one of the oldest NGOs working towards a Cleaner, Quieter, Healthier world.

Our voice is heard regionally through the Divisional Structure, Nationally through our staff at Head Quarters and the many volunteers and members who work tirelessly in the Air Quality, Noise and Land sub committees and of course those on Council and the Trustees who manage our most important assets, personnel and finance and direct policy, and Internationally through our links with Government Departments and international organisations such as IUAPPA.

We are a broad church organisation balancing views from regulator to regulated from academia to individuals. Our strength is derived from members but delivered through the organisation as a whole. It is what we are and recognised, as such, by our peers.

I am sure that you would all agree that it is something of which we should all be proud.

In 1972 when I qualified as an Environmental Health Officer I was instantly thrust into the workings of the then NSCA enjoying the 'Friendly Society' and the interactive nature of the membership. I remember meeting those influential people who I had only just been reading about and whose books I had used (and still do) studying to get through my finals and the then Diploma on Air Pollution of the RSH - a body that I was later to become a lecturer and examiner.

The works of Briggs on plume rise, Bosanquet on the spread of a plume, Sutton on Diffusion, Clarke on Power Station pollutant dispersion, Turner and Gifford. I learned such phrases as Gaussian Plume Dispersion, Stability categories, how to calculate buoyancy of a plume and when to apply the different algorithms – all worked out by calculator I might add.

I corresponded with mathematicians and plume dispersion academics at Oak Ridge in California and there fostered a passion for the derivation of empirical formula to provide answers to the many questions of my limited knowledge.

I learned such phrases as Puff Plume, Cal Puff, Rim-Puff all along way from the present day Puff Daddy – is this a new plume dispersion algorithm I ask my self or is it really to do with noise?! Note to self – Must assess pollution implications.

Several of the people mentioned brought an insight to the Society that was crucial at a time of change. A time when our agenda had to be in line with the needs of the day.

Our standing as an NGO in the Clean Air field was second to none. Our meetings were frequented by the movers and shakers of their time just as they are at present.

This year we have produced some 144 news and press items. All on major topics. That's broadly one every three days. We have delivered 35 Land Quality, 60 Noise, 20 Transportation and 12 Neighbourhood nuisance reports either internally instigated (discussed and agreed at the sub committees) or in response to detailed and technical consultation documents.

In addition we have produced some 51 publications covering Biomass, Noise nuisance, Tyre Noise, Education, contaminated land standards and have been members of pollution working groups too numerous to mention at HQ or Regional level.

This is an outstanding achievement based on the number of committed staff at our Brighton Office who we should take time to congratulate.

Environmental Protection UK is at work and is seen in every part of the UK through Divisional representation.

Each division has its own unique way of working. It is not a 'one size fits all' society.

It is evident that cultural and regional balances need to be different but the worth of Environmental Protection UK is and always has been the eagerness of members and staff to help other divisions when needed and this should be commended.

In my time as Chairman I have been proud of the work being done throughout the Society. I have visited 7 of the 10 Divisions. I have been to Wales on two occasions – once I had to pay to get in but latterly I found route through the valleys to meet the Wales Pollution Group in order to fan the embers of the Welsh Division. I am hoping for a hot, quick fire to be rekindled and I think that we may be on the brink of finding a new secretary and establish tighter links with the Welsh Assembly once more. I think translating the presentation into Welsh might have tipped the balance.

Divisional Secretaries meet twice a year to exchange views and develop best practice programmes. This year we welcomed the new secretaries from the West Midlands and Northern Divisions so we now nearly have a full complement.

Our Divisions do work hard. Some of the headlines are;

National Students and Young Professionals competition- SW Division's annual competition awarded on the 13th July.

NW Construction Coordination for the Environment linking with the SE Division's pollution reduction initiative for construction sites.

Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland =- awards for Scotland's most environmentally friendly businesses.

West Midlands – under new management – ran a seminar on Organic Contaminants: Estimation, Evaluation & Remedial Solutions and had five speakers on a day in April. The presentations are well worth a look at and are on the web site.

I must also make mention of our President, Nigel Haigh, who has endeavoured to promote climate change in the work that we do by arranging meetings of members, picked the brains of those of influence, brought reports to Council and instigated a consultation that is available – now – on our website. In truth we cover some aspects of Climate change in all that we do but our clarity or purpose in this regard is crucial; so my thanks go to Nigel for raising the Climate Change profile.

As you can see the year has been very busy.

In addition we have been wrestling with the Organisational Review, looking inwardly at how our business is done and outwardly to assess whether we could do it more efficiently and economically (as you will see from the papers on the agenda our bank balance is better than last year but there is still concern for the future) whilst not losing sight of our continuing goal to be the most effective organisation in the field and the 'First Stop for environmental issues.'

The review has taken some 10 months to complete. We addressed all aspects of our organisation. We postulated and discussed options for delivery. We took hold, assessed, broke up, restructured, pondered and consulted on our thoughts and I would like to thank, at this stage. All those of you who took the time to consider the words and suggestions of the Working Group and for the Members of the Working Group – Phil, Paul, Loveday, Nigel and Bill along with the numerous staff at Accenture for completing the task of producing the report ready for decision making on the proposals that are before you on today's agenda. I hope that you think, as I do, that it is a report that was well worth the time spent. I enjoyed chairing the group and the long days and late nights are to be cherished forever in my household.

The future of Environmental Protection UK is in the hands of members. It is the way we do things. We are member orientated and for this we should be proud.

Our inclusivity is important. Important to Trustees, who are mostly elected from Divisions, to Council who's members are all elected from Divisions and to the staff of Environmental Protection UK who are all dependent on members to crystallize views.

This may be the last meeting that I have the pleasure to Chair. My two years in the Chair have been at times challenging, at times frustrating and some times awe inspiring but all the time enjoyable.

I would like to leave you with one thought.

We have the potential to be better. We have the foresight and the experience within our membership to achieve much, to break new ground, to be instrumental in making great strides in developing and promoting our thoughts and influencing decision makers on the benefits of pollution reduction and mechanisms by which this can be achieved. Our labelling programme launched with VOLVO last evening is witness to our cutting edge philosophy.

Let us not shy away from it.