
REPORT 5
(1215/52/IM)

EECA BIOFUELS CONFERENCE - REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

To report back to all Councillors on the Conference including the subjects covered and an opinion of the value of attendance by Elected Members.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Strategy and Policy Committee

- 1. Receive the information.*

3. Details on the Conference

ENERGYWISE COUNCILS ANNUAL FORUM 2006

PLANNING FOR THE END OF AN ERA

What can local government do to get ready for a world without cheap oil?

Thursday 9 March 2006

Nelson

Cr Pepperell and Jim Ebenhoh attended the conference

*Keynote speakers were; Matt Simmons, Chair, Simmons and Company International
Peter Griffiths, General Manager, BP Oil New Zealand.*

4. Subjects Covered

Peak Oil and the implications

The title of the forum was "Planning for the End of an Era: What can local government do to get ready for a world without cheap oil?" In keeping with that theme, one of the keynotes was specifically about "peak oil"--presented by Matt Simmons, chairman of Simmons & Co International (he featured in a video that Cllr Pepperell showed to fellow Councillors and WCC staff last year).

Because most attendees seemed to agree that the peak oil question was about "when" rather than "if"--that is, at some point in the not-too-distant future the economically feasible extraction of oil will begin to decline--much of the forum focussed on ways that we can try to use energy more efficiently and shift to renewable energy sources.

A presentation by Dr Ralph Sims of Massey University, who is on the International Panel for Climate Change, highlighted that climate change is a similarly imminent event that provides extra incentive for the reduction of fossil fuel use and the greater use of non-carbon-emitting renewable energy sources (wind, hydro, geothermal, solar, etc.)

Some of the highlights, in addition to Matt Simmons and Ralph Sims, were:

- Peter Griffiths, General Manager of BP Oil NZ. He stated BP's view that peak oil would occur in 5-17 years, highlighted that many BP petrol stations now have solar panel canopies that power the stations, and pointed to the potential of biodiesel (made from animal tallow) and hydrogen energy for NZ's energy future. He doesn't think renewables like hydro, wind and solar can close the gap between energy demand and supply.
- Leah McBey, Dunedin City Councillor. She gave an impassioned speech about the role of local authorities in rising to the challenge of "powering down to the solar age." She also asked the forum for a resolution to form a joint central/local govt task force on NZ oil vulnerability, but EECA and Local Govt NZ advised her that this forum had no such authority.
- Dr Ralph Chapman, Director of Environmental Studies at Victoria University. He made useful linkages between urban form/design and energy use, including the energy-saving benefits of compactness and connectivity, which allow for reduced motor vehicle use.
- Martin Lynch, former energy manager at Hamilton City Council. He presented an interesting case study of his work as an energy manager for HCC during the past 7 years, which led to HCC winning a EnergyWise Award earlier this month. Some of his tips, like starting with low-hanging-fruit like lighting, getting a senior management "champion," and using specialised software, can help WCC implement the Energy Management Plan initiative that Zach Rissel has proposed. Another knowledgeable person on this topic seems to be Michelle Dawson, Project Manager for Cleaner Production at Waitakere City Council. And Waverley Parsons, the Climate Change Advisor at Kapiti Coast District Council, also seems to be doing a lot in this area.
- We saw the landfill gas facility at the Nelson City tip, and heard David Reid from "Energy for the Future" (part of Meridian) talk about how this gas is sent down the hill to Nelson Hospital for their heating needs. This is a beneficial use of gas generated by decomposing rubbish at the landfill--gas that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere as the harmful greenhouse gas methane, or flared without energy benefits.

Various EECA staff also gave presentations on the work they're doing and pointed to sources of funding and advice that could be helpful to local authorities like WCC:

- Joseph Mayhew, EECA solar energy advisor, is trying to get more local govt uptake of solar water heating in its own operations and better local government support for solar heating through its building control functions; this seems to fit well with the initiative Zach Rissel has proposed on "sustainable building guidelines" for WCC.
- EECA has an "Emprove" template that can help local governments with their energy policy.

- EECA's Crown Loan scheme offers interest-free financing of energy efficiency/conservation measures (WCC has already accessed this for audits of some major energy-using facilities like swimming pools).
- The Govt3 programme on sustainable procurement will soon be rolled out by Ministry for the Environment from central government to local government.

A somewhat comical but telling occurrence was when we were all sweltering in the giant tent-marquee on the sunny Friday afternoon, getting no relief from opening tent flaps here and there, until someone realised that the giant torch gas heaters they put in the chilly morning before were still burning away! We now have to work extra hard to offset our carbon emissions from the forum itself!

I will leave the binder from the conference on my bookshelf if anyone wants to have a look or copy any of it while I'm away. I think the Power Points will also be available on-line (www.eeca.govt.nz) in the not-too-distant future, though you won't get my illuminating (possibly illegible) annotation.

5. Material for Circulation

www.oilcrash.com is a website dedicated to educating the public about Peak Oil. More details on the Conference can be seen on www.pepptalk.net

6. Benefit to Council/Elected Members

Overall, the forum was great in some ways--lots of enthused and committed people with some real success stories. But it was also a bit depressing, as peak oil and climate change issues were discussed in pretty dire terms, and it's not obvious that our success stories will sufficiently alter the overriding narrative.

Report prepared by: *Councillor Pepperell*