

bcet launches cfs at nrm

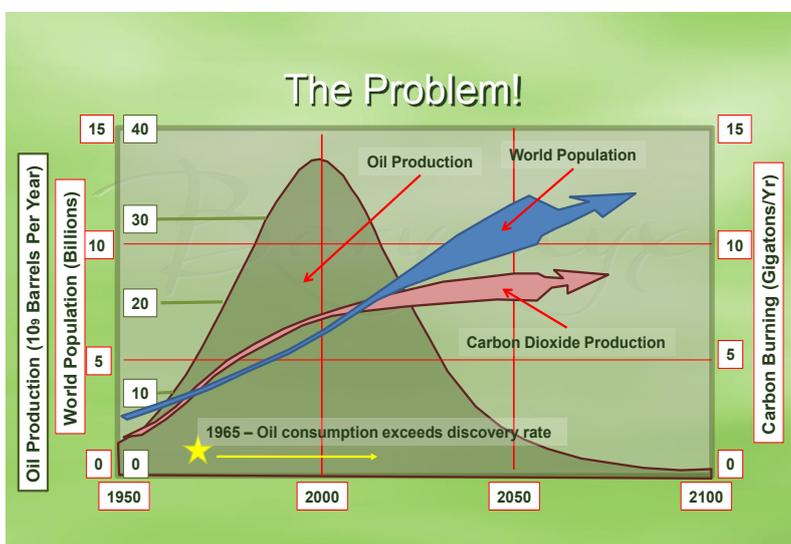
The prestigious launch of the Burial & Cremation Education Trust's Carbon Footprint Scheme took place at the National Railway Museum, York on the 20th July. Guests enjoyed the hospitality extended by the Trust at a delicious buffet lunch before being formally welcomed by Brian Stott, Chairman of the Trust who introduced the event's three distinguished speakers.

First was keynote speaker Ken West, MBE, pictured below with Brian Stott. Ken gave a comprehensive presentation, strongly suggesting an industry-wide move on a voluntary basis towards benchmarking before a potential move towards corporate carbon restrictions are imposed. This was thought-provoking in itself, and clearly put in perspective when the mindset of our generation was highlighted with our throw away approach to life, developed with a post war psychology and relative abundance of goods.



Having developed the Burial and Cremation Education Trust's Carbon Footprint Scheme himself Ken identified how managers can reduce an authority's impact on the environment when tackling areas over which they have control. These include holding over coffins and increasing the duration between the mowing of grounds to name but two. These approaches can not only result in reduced expenditure but also decrease the carbon load being produced. In conclusion Ken highlighted how by driving down fixed costs while understanding the needs of the bereaved we responsibly address a global approach to sustainability.

Ian Hatton, B.Sc. (Hons), CEO of Baryonyx Corporation an Austin Texas based company, then spoke on 'Energy and Climate Change'. Ian presented evidence from the distant geologic record of climate change caused by the amount of heat energy entering the earth's atmosphere. Data from more recent Antarctic ice cores showed that the carbon dioxide (CO₂) content of the atmosphere (a 'greenhouse' gas) was now at an unprecedented level and very much out of step with previous natural variation. The recent increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide correlated to the beginning of the industrial revolution and the widespread combustion of fossil fuels.



In illustrating energy supply issues he showed that growth in population was linked to the availability of low cost energy in what has become known as the hydrocarbon era. As hydrocarbon consumption has outstripped the rate of discovery, production on a global basis is in decline and an energy gap is developing which implies that the era of low-cost energy is coming to an end. The effects on global climate change (higher temperatures, water shortages, increasing sea-levels) are such that they place increasing pressure on the agricultural sector to maintain food supplies for a population that is projected to double by mid-century. By contrast our ability to supply adequate energy to meet basic living needs is dependent on developing sustainable forms of energy production and conserving energy in order to reduce or constrain demand.

As befitting the venue at the National Railway Museum the final speaker, Charles Howlett opened his paper by using the analogy of the way operating records were made of Cornish Beam Engines working in Cornwall's mines in the 19th century (known as the 'Engine Reporters') so that the efficiency of different makes of engine could be compared with their competitors. This led to engine building becoming a fiercely competitive industry as manufacturer's introduced a succession of improvements in a bid to outdo their rivals. Charles suggested that if enough authorities joined the Carbon Footprint Scheme this could be the beginning of similar records being built up about different makes of cremator (perhaps becoming known as the 'Cremator Reporters'), something he considered was overdue and would be of future benefit to authorities when choosing new cremators.



Charles went on to give a short fact-based report on what he and his staff had been doing at Chilterns Crematorium since 2004 to reduce the amount of fuel being used per cremation. As we all know, cremators consume significant amounts of energy and using them more efficiently not only reduces the size of a crematorium's carbon footprint but also saves money – and helps gain a higher score for those authorities joining the Carbon Footprint Scheme!

Charles described a number of step by step measures he had introduced over the last six years which have brought about an overall 30%+ reduction in energy consumption (gas and electricity combined). These measures included extending the length of the working day to 12 hours by introducing staff rotas, holding coffins overnight and using auto start to enable the cremator to start work as soon as staff arrive in the morning, and auto stop to extend the length of the working day just that little bit further. An additional bonus resulting from the success of these measures has been the decommissioning and subsequent removal of one of the four cremators at Chilterns Crematorium, saving on maintenance costs and also making space for the new abatement plant without having to build an extension.



The launch closed with a questions and answers session before guests were invited to register for the scheme and enjoy a free tour of the museum.

I would like to say a very, very big "thank you" to the three companies and their representatives – Elaine Innes of Steel and Stone, York, Kim Stopher of IFZW Maintenance Ltd and Ron Munton of Furnace Construction Cremators Ltd – who all kindly sponsored and supported the event. Their presence enhanced the day for us all.

This was a fantastic event thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of those who attended and the expertise of our speakers.

For further information about the Carbon Footprint Scheme, or the work of the Trust, please contact me,

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Photographs courtesy of Kevin Pilkington



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