Government&Public Affairs

Scotland can lead the world in new carbon capture technologies

Adrian Clamp

THE countdown to a global treaty on climate change in Copenhagen is on – and so, too, is the race to harness the economic potential of carbon capture and storage (CCS).

Scotland is uniquely placed to be at the forefront of developing this new technology, thanks to the cavernous space under the North Sea that once stored oil resources. With challenges facing its financial sector, seizing the opportunity to create a new world-leading CO_2 storage industry in Scotland would be a "once in a generation" achievement.

Success is within reach, but it will require bold and decisive action and a visionary partnership between government and private industry.

Storing CO_2 is recognised around the world as one of the most effective ways to cut the emissions of greenhouse gases from coal-fired power plants, and the race to find the new global leaders in this new industry has already begun.

President Obama has declared that he wants CCS technology ready for use in US coal-fired stations within a decade. In Norway, finance minister Kristin Halvorsen recently announced that his government plans to raise almost £400 million – a record investment – to spend next year on CCS technology.

The emerging markets will rely on innovation in the West to show the way forward. China, for example, which built an average of one new coal-fired power station every four days in 2006, will become a major CCS customer in future.

The UK is off to a good start with the launch of a CCS competition, which offers potentially hundreds of millions of pounds to support demonstration projects that can capture 90 per cent of the carbon from a commercial scale coal-fired plant.

In Scotland, the publication of an Edinburgh University-led study has demonstrated Scotland's capacity to store not just its own CO_2 emissions but also those of the UK and other parts of Europe. First Minister Alex Salmond has spoken of creating 10,000 jobs in the Scottish CCS industry.

But how can Scotland take a decisive lead in the race?

The answer, just as in Copenhagen, is in achieving substantial, meaningful and purposeful collaboration.

Accenture's view is that those who understand the nature of the new collaboration and the interests and needs of each party can lead the way.

Scotland is rightly ambitious about a green future and has set its sights on an 80 per cent cut in CO_2 emissions by 2050. CCS is a significant challenge and no one organisation can produce the technology and harness the space under the North Sea by itself.

For this reason, it is critical that there be collaboration between leading energy businesses and between these private-sector businesses and government, north and south of the Border.

The CCS industry is still in an emerging phase. Full implementation requires a significant amount of public funding, which the European Union and UK government is starting to provide.

Persuasive regulatory and financial incentives will be needed to help minimise the investment risks and encourage the major investment required.

> Winning the race requires firms to trust each other and their public-sector partners and vice versa

The consortia of partner companies, which plan to work together to deploy CCS, will need to play to each partner's strengths and build on existing capabilities and assets.

New frameworks and operating regimes will need to be developed to ensure costs and risks are managed appropriately and transparently.

Winning the race requires private sector companies to trust and challenge each other and their public sector partners, and vice versa.

With so much at stake, all need to act in one unified direction. All will need to deal with lack of certainty around the long-term value of CO_2 and confidentiality issues from sharing commercially sensitive intellectual property and strategy.

Finally, the general public also has a role to play. Thousands of people are expected to march against climate change through Glasgow on Saturday. Public support for the new CCS industry in Scotland will play a key part ensuring that appropriate significant investment can be made in Scotland, and that this "once in a generation" opportunity does not slip through our fingers.

● *Adrian Clamp is resource industries partner at Accenture UK*

Why there's no instant answer to democracy's growing crisis

An academic's fears for western-style politics reveal new threats on the margins, finds Christopher Mackie

ON SATURDAY, one brave politics academic will stand before a crowd at a Scottish university and ask the provocative question: "What is so good about democracy?"

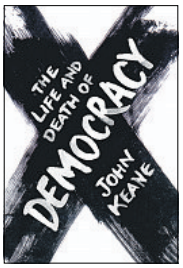
In times gone by, such concerns expressed about the fundaments of the way that western countries are governed might have been dismissed as the rantings of someone from the extreme fringes of political debate.

But, as the UK reaches the end of a year in which a brutal recession has shredded its confidence and an expenses scandal has eroded trust in the politicians who lead us, the question to be posed by Professor John Keane this weekend looks increasingly mainstream.

His lecture at Dundee University will draw on themes raised in his latest book, *The Life and Death of Democracy*, that strike doubt to the very heart of the way we run our country.

"There is developing a deep malaise in all existing democracies," he tells *The Scotsman* ahead of his appearance.

"There is a widespread sense that parliaments don't function properly and members are too heavily 'whipped'. There is a widespread sense that government executives have a deep control over parliaments. This is depressingly familiar and goes alongside the bellyaching against politicians."



Controversial: *The Life and Death of Democracy*

One of the UK's leading political thinkers, Keane is a noted author and professor of politics at the University of Westminster and at the Wissenschaftszentrum in Berlin.

His contention is that the global postwar period led to a celebration of the "victory" of western democracy that led western cultures to become complacent about the righteousness of their governance system. This, he says, has encouraged us to "sleepwalk" into the situation that democracy now finds itself in.

He points to rapidly declining engagement with politics, something demonstrated in the vast drop-off in political party membership and a dwindling turn-out in local and national elections.

"There are very few precedents for these trends," he says. "They are worrying and anybody who has a concern for democracy and its future needs to look at the symptoms and come up with new solutions for repairing these institutions."

Keane adds: "This is not just a British problem; it is a general trend through pretty much every existing democracy, whether that be South African or North American."

One of the issues he detects, and one that has been typified and exacerbated by the Westminster expenses' saga, is a growing move towards a political elite that is disconnected from the electorate. "I agree there is mounting evidence that electorates perceive politics as a closed shop – the sense that there is a political elite that has formed and the game is not theirs," he says. "Citizens find it very difficult to get into that game, and this is a symptom of this malaise.

"We are seeing a withdrawal from politics and interest in public affairs and a rising number of people who haven't made up their mind on the eve of elections. There is also a rise of populist parties."

Prof Keane cites the Le Pen phenomenon in France, as well as the growing popularity of Ukip and the BNP in Britain, as examples of a drum-beating populism that claims to move the democratic process closer to the desires of the people.

"These are symptoms of a widespread feeling that politics has become an elite business," he says."When you add to this, the way the elite has handled some major crises in recent years, such as the Iraq occupation and the near collapse of the banking system, there is a sense that politics is not for the ordinary man and woman, and this is not good for a democracy."

To add to the problem, Prof Keane is critical of what he calls the "overuse" of democracy by the West in its foreign policy.

"There is a smell of hypocrisy around democracy," he says. "Would we say, with our hands on our hearts, that democracy is coming to Iraq or Afghanistan? The clear answer is no."

The other trend he detects is the rise of alternatives to the model of democracy, pointing to a clutch of regimes, such as that found in Burma, Venezuela and Iran, in which, he contends, a new type of dictatorship is emerging that may turn out to be viable.

"The most important case is that of China," he says. "What happens in China will co-determine the future of democracy. In China, we have an almighty struggle between two different futures. In one, China is an empire and a big global player, where wealth creation and an expanding middle class point to a modern, 21st-century country. But there is no democracy in the sense of a power-sharing, multi-party system that has universal rights and freedoms.

"On the other hand, there is a vision for a China that is democratic with Chinese characteristics. It is just possible the vision of China ruled by a single party, with an expanding wealth base will succeed."

But is the apparent viability of the regime made possible by the country's increasing wealth? "This is an old point," he begins, "that you can't have democracy unless there is a minimum standard of living. But we are seeing examples where you can develop a middle class and wealth that is distributed widely enough to have a tranquillising effect on democratic instincts."

China, with its centralised bureaucratic state

Despite its growing influence, the regime in China remains under attack, notably helped by the pervasive influence of the internet on its citizens. The role of the web in forming the democracies – or otherwise – of the future is, Prof Keane maintains, absolutely key.

"We are living in an age of communicative abundance," he says. "This growth of an internet galaxy is without precedent. It is the first time in the history of the human species when time and space have collapsed – you can communicate with others in real time across vast dis-

Professor John Keane warns of the dangers from populism and the internet too

apparatus and growing military might, is developing a form of capitalism with no relation to democratic norms

Picture: Getty Images

tances. The tyranny of distance has been broken."

For Prof Keane, the opportunities opened up for democracies by the internet are both positive and negative. First of all, he cites some observers' belief that the internet is an "underwriter of democracy", opening up an egalitarian democratisation of information as a route towards a more positive future. "There is a big transfer in the nature and meaning of democracy, towards a kind of post-representative democracy – a monitory democracy," he says. "A kind of democracy with permanent public scrutiny of those who wield power."

But he warns that alongside such positives lie "decadent" internet trends that could stifle improving democratisation. Included in these is growth of "gated communities" in the form of subscription-only websites, something he says has "an exclusionary effect".

He calls on policymakers to consider ways space on the net can be opened to encourage greater engagement along the lines of the Reithian principle under which the BBC was brought into being with radio broadcasting.

And he cautions against the move towards the use of the web to perform instant referendums. "That is the populist option – the belief that the only way to govern and overcome elite grip is to get 'the people' involved through direct referenda," he says. "History shows that is always bad for democracy.

"Every recorded case where people are called upon involves manipulation. Demagogues, populists who, unless they are wise, typically abuse the basic principle of democracy – that the people should govern themselves."

● *Prof John Keane will give Dundee University's Christmas Lecture in the Dalhousie Building on Saturday at 6pm.*

For tickets, call 01382 385564 or e-mail events@dundee.ac.uk.

Briefing Board

PEOPLE

■ A PILOT forum that will test ways for adult survivors of abuse in residential care to discuss their experiences has appointed a chairman and two commissioners to lead its work.

Tom Shaw, who authored a review of the children's homes system in 2007, will lead the group in its set up ahead of evidence sessions beginning next year.

He will be joined on the forum by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Kathleen Marshall and forensic clinical psychologist Anne Carpenter.

NEWS

■ COUNCILS should explore new ways of funding economic development activities as the resources available in this area are likely to be constrained in the coming years, according to a report commissioned by the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group.

The report, prepared by Ekos Consultants, said the lack of funding was "the key issue" for local authorities in furthering economic development.

It said councils, whose current spend on such development was estimated as £200 million a year, should look at options including tax increment funding, and increased engagement with the private sector in the form of arrangements such as joint ventures.

"The resources available for economic development are likely to be constrained," the report said.

"In the short term the economic downturn means less private resources and in the longer term lower budget settlements will have a similar effect. It will therefore be important to ensure that all LAs are aware of all different sources, methods and opportunities to fund future activities."

The report, which revealed that there were currently 1,100 staff dedicated to council economic development in Scotland, also said there was "no robust and consistent" method to measure the performance of economic development.

It called on councils to develop a corporate approach to measuring and evaluating key performance indicators.

And it recommended that local authorities review delivery partnerships to see if they were effective and suggested that consideration should be given to producing national guidance on how economic development is best promoted across Scotland.

■ A NEW programme to help Scottish businesses benefit from public procurement contracts has been launched by the Scottish Government.

The measures, agreed by the Public Procurement Advisory Group, include improved guidance on how firms can access procurement opportunities as well as a simplification of procurement processes and better guidance for buyers and suppliers involved in government contracts.

Enterprise minister Jim Mather said: "These measures directly address the issues raised by business, such as the simplification and standardisation of procurement processes, enhanced assistance for businesses in pursuing public procurement opportunities and new guidance to public bodies on how to reflect economic impact in procurement strategies."

EVENTS

■ THE Scottish Trades Union Congress has stated its support for the White Ribbon March being held in Stirling today to protest against violence against women.

Speaking before the march the organisation's general secretary, Grahame Smith said: "Our homes, streets and workplaces should be free from fear and violence for all women. We commend the White Ribbon Campaign in Scotland for organising with men to speak out."

For public sector jobs in Scotland...
go to: scotsman.com/jobs

scotsman.com/jobs

In partnership with myjobscotland