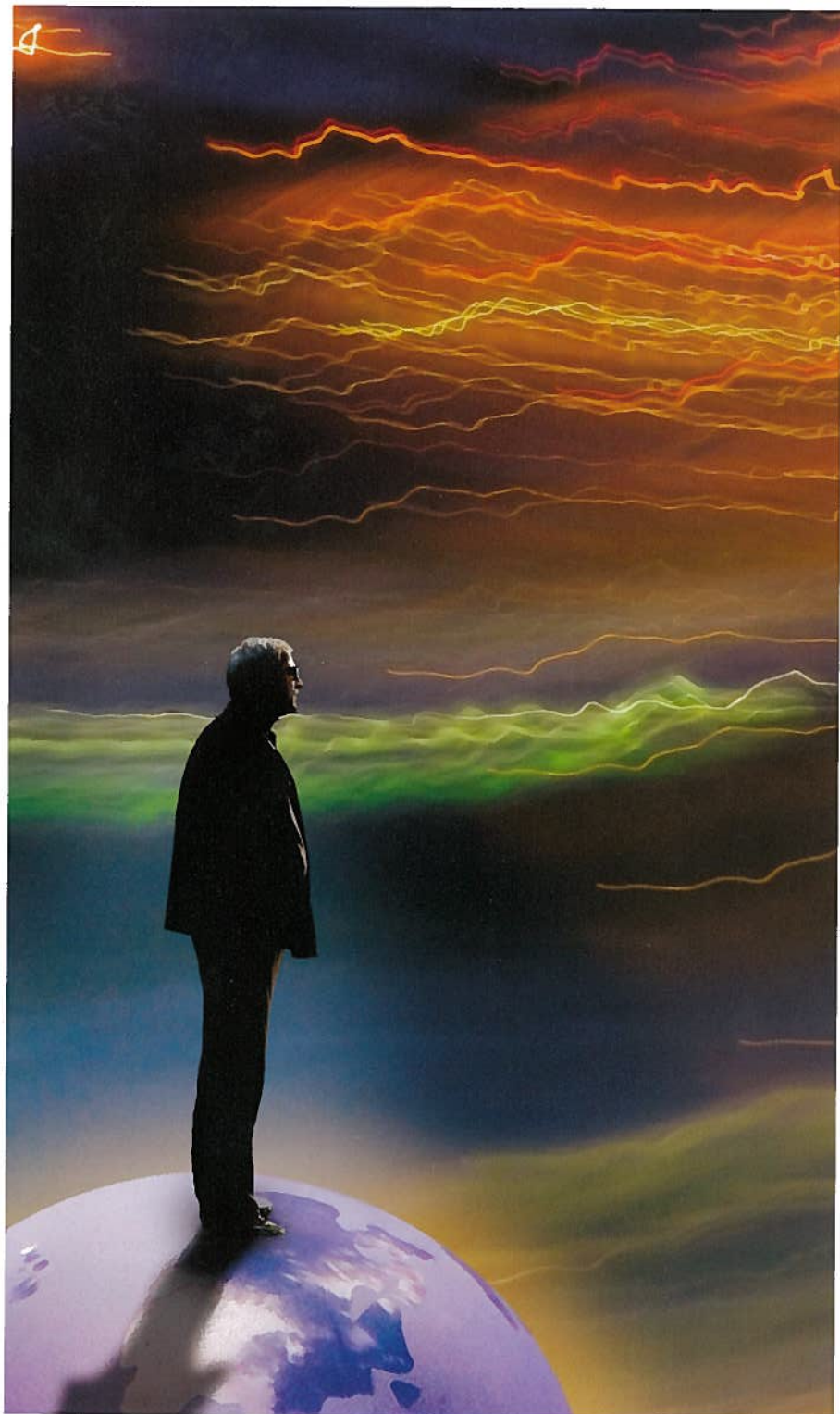


The future

Choosing our tomorrows

A new film unveiled at the show will provoke debate



By Dave Stevens

IMAGINE the year is 2050. What if - in an attempt to meet our target of an 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions - Scotland has embraced nuclear power to produce all of its electricity? Or in an attempt to feed our share of the anticipated 9 billion people in the world, we have farmed every last square metre of the available countryside, filling it with GM crops and livestock developed by giant US agribusinesses?

Alternatively, what if we've shunned our high-carbon lifestyles - buying most of our seasonal food (and some renewable energy) from local farmers, reducing our commuting as more people work from home, and never flying anywhere (even on holiday)?

Or, what if we continued to be highly dependent on fossil fuels, squeezing every last drop from dwindling oil reserves as its price spirals upwards? How will rural Scotland cope with climate change as it experiences warmer, drier summers and milder, wetter winters, with dramatic increases in storms and flooding?

Obviously, nobody can accurately predict the future, but the 'perfect storm' of conditions leading to our current world food crisis has given us a glimpse into a future where food crops fetch a higher price as biofuels, vital food-producing areas are devastated by extreme weather, and the ever increasing global demand for oil has sent its price - and the price of many other things dependent on oil for their production - rocketing to a record high.

Such a convergence of events clearly demonstrates how both climate change, and our responses to climate change, will have profound impacts, on both our environment and our society. Coping with higher food prices or switching to energy saving light bulbs is just the tip of a very large iceberg of effects. The truth is that 'all bets are off', and there will be very few aspects of our everyday lives that won't be affected over the coming decades.

However, up until now, the public debate surrounding climate change has been fairly rudimentary. The pantomime of 'climate change is real' 'oh-no-it-isn't', 'oh-yes-it-is' that is regularly played out in