

our media needs to move on, and quickly. Instead, we should now be asking 'how do we want to live?'

The renowned business trouble-shooter, Peter Drucker, once wrote "the best way to predict the future is to create it" and a short film portraying what life might be like in 2050 intends to help kick start the process.

The Macaulay Institute (in collaboration with film-makers Callisto Productions) has made a film called *Choosing our Tomorrows* which explores what life could be like in 2050, depending on our responses (or lack of responses) to climate change. The film - which will be unveiled at this year's Royal Highland Show - portrays the lives of the same fictional Scottish farming family in three alternative futures, as is recorded in their video diaries.

In the first of these, (entitled 'Business as Usual') society has done very little to change in the face of climate change. Despite repeated high-profile warnings in the early half of the century, global responses to climate change proved too little, too late. A lack of international agreement between governments on how to tackle the issue, has led to general apathy amongst the populace - the majority of whom continued to live their high carbon lifestyles, regardless.

Renewable energy never became more than a small fraction of total energy production (the only thing slowing the use of fossil fuels is their extortionate costs). This has led to the predicted continued rise in greenhouse gas emissions, and for many regions of the globe, the severe consequences of a changed climate have been realised. In Scotland, summers are two degrees warmer than now, and they are mostly very dry. Winters are milder but wetter. Huge storms have become common place. Many low-lying areas have become permanently flooded.

The family's home is an East Lothian farm which has been able to survive and expand, whilst many of their smaller neighbours have sold their land to other farmers. The farm is in a traditional farming community and has been in the family since 1900, but recent years have seen an influx of well-off urbanites moving into empty farm houses in search of the rural idyll. Wealthy, gated communities have started cropping up in this and other rural areas.

For generations it was considered a nice area to raise a family, but these last few years, high unemployment, combined with government imposed fuel rationing and (in some years) food shortages, has seen an increase in rural crime and general civil unrest. Environmental refugees from

southern Europe, who have been flooding into southern England for some years, are now even starting to appear locally.

As a response to increased climate change and dwindling fossil fuels, in the second film ('Living off the land'), Scotland's electricity is now mostly supplied from nuclear, whereas most transport is powered by biofuels - meaning fossil fuel usage has been significantly reduced to just a handful of 'cleaner' gas power stations. However, this worldwide switch away from high greenhouse gas emissions has taken a couple of decades, so the effects of climate change are still significant.



The making of *Choosing our Tomorrows*

There will be very few aspects of our everyday lives that won't be affected over the coming decades

In the 2010s, a number of governments, taking their lead from America and its multi-national corporations, invested heavily in GM crops and animals, agricultural engineering projects, and biotech research as a way of using the available land to meet our spiralling food and energy needs. Farming is now typically on a large scale - intensive and hi-tech. Liquid fuel prices are high and, therefore, so are food prices. There is a vast annual expenditure on engineering, flood defences, CO2 scrubbers, GM crops, GM livestock and GM biofuels.

The Scottish countryside is very different from fifty years previously - it has a very low population with food and energy production on an industrial-scale, and as a result, the natural environment is suffering badly. Hardly any recreation or nature conservation occurs in rural areas, unless the land has no other value. Most people now live in cities or towns which are powered by the resources provided by the countryside.

In the third film ('No place like home') we learn that in the early decades of the 21st century a number of rural communities across Scotland - faced with high fossil fuel costs - started to move towards 'relocalisation'. The 'eco-communities' they created invested in locally produced (and relatively cheap) electricity sources such as wind, solar, micro hydro, or (for those on the coast) tidal. High transport fuel costs not only favoured a move towards buying locally produced food, but also constrained commuting - leading to many people working from home. Overseas travel, particularly for holidays, is virtually unheard of. Consequently, there is a great sense of community, with people working, shopping, going to school and seeking entertainment, locally.

At first, much of the rest of Scottish society were sceptical or unwilling to change to this way of life, but a combination of the high transport fuel costs, fears about climate change, government start-up grants and the desire for 'quality' produce, led to more and more such 'relocalised' communities evolving both across the UK and internationally. By acting early, the worldwide effects of climate change have been curtailed.

The family farm is small scale and diverse, and it is one of a few major suppliers of heat and power to the community. There are several enterprises on it, including wood fuel, wind turbines, pigs, chickens, oats, and poly tunnels with fruit and vegetables. High fuel costs means the farm is not heavily mechanised, and it therefore is also a significant local employer, both in relation to its production and retail enterprises.

The films are an attempt to stimulate wider debate around the issues of climate change and our responses to it, and are not intended in any way to be exact representations of 2050 (as to paraphrase Samuel Goldwyn, only a fool would try and predict the future). Rather by giving people a range of possible futures to react to, we can explore some of the decisions that society already has to face.

We hope that the film is seen and used by as varied a group of people as possible - from the classrooms and farm houses of Scotland to the main debating chamber at Holyrood - and if the format proves a successful way to engage with people, we hope to extend it to include more video diaries from individuals from other walks of life, not just farming.

'*Choosing Our Tomorrows*' can be seen at www.macaulay.ac.uk/videos/ and for more information email d.stevens@macaulay.ac.uk