

## **WORLD RENOWNED SCIENTISTS GATHER AT ISLAND'S INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

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Around 180 of the world's leading scientists and other experts in the field of landslides and climate change will be arriving on the Island next week for a four day international conference entitled 'Landslides and Climate Change -- Challenges and Solutions'.

The conference which is taking place at the Ventnor Winter Gardens from 21-24 May is being organised by the Isle of Wight Council's Centre for the Coastal Environment and is the third international event of this kind to be arranged on the Island in the last fifteen years. The conference is also supported by the United Nations' 'International Strategy for Disaster Reduction' and the European Commission and will provide the opportunity to disseminate, internationally, the results of a three year research project called 'Response' (Responding to the risks from climate change), which was led by the Council's Centre for the Coastal Environment and published in December 2006.

Conference delegates will be welcomed by Councillor Roger Mazillius, the new Chairman of the Isle of Wight Council, whilst Council Leader, Andy Sutton, will be making the opening address. The technical programme will be introduced by Dr Robin McInnes OBE, who is Chairman of the International Organising Committee and the Council's Coastal Manager. He will introduce Dr Christophe Bonnard who is making the Keynote Address on behalf of the United Nations from Geneva. The issue of global climate change will be introduced by Dr Stephan Harrison, who is Research Associate at Exeter University; Dr Harrison is an expert on landscape responses to climate change and glacier retreat.

The conference, which is being funded by income from fees and sponsorship, will provide delegates with opportunities to hear from experts in the management of natural hazards and to exchange ideas, and also to develop networks and partnerships aimed at accessing EU funding programmes in 2008. Several international partnership meetings relating to current projects will also take place on Friday 25 May after the formal conference proceedings have been completed.

The Isle of Wight has been a source of much interest on an international stage for the work that the Coastal Environment Centre has conducted to stabilise the erosion of the Island's vulnerable coastline. With winter rainfall predicted to increase by 26-30% by 2100, and the prospect of drier summers affecting the stability of the Island's natural clay soil, the work of the council's coastal environment team is being watched by others in areas threatened by ground instability to see what lessons can be learned. Work, for example, with local water companies to assess better ground drainage and with other companies looking at improved building design.

The international conference will also provide the opportunity for the Leader of the Council, Councillor Sutton to sign the 'Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change' a Charter that commits the Council to work at a local level to deliver the United Kingdom Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for Carbon Dioxide reduction by 2010. Isle of Wight Council Leader, Councillor Andy Sutton said "Addressing the issues of climate change and reducing carbon emissions is a top priority for the Council. We shall be encouraging all sectors of the Island community to take the opportunity to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to reduce their

own greenhouse gas emissions. We shall be monitoring the progress of our plans against the actions needed, and we will publish the results".

"The physical environment presents particular challenges as far as the Isle of Wight is concerned and I am very pleased that we continue to play an international role in this field and are at the forefront of research and practical applications in terms of mitigating the impacts of climate change".

Dr Robin McInnes OBE said "this conference will provide the opportunity to exchange ideas with experts from other locations facing similar problems to the Isle of Wight. At our last geotechnical conference in 2002 delegates were very enthusiastic about the Island, both as a geotechnical study area and a spectacular, friendly environment; I am sure our delegates this year will be equally impressed and that businesses and residents will extend a warm welcome to our guests".