



The 17th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry was held in Inverness, Scotland between the 30<sup>th</sup> of November and 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 2016. Hosted by the Environmental Research Institute of the University of the Highlands and Islands, the event marked the return of EMEC to Scotland and to Inverness.

EMEC meetings are delivered on behalf of the Association of Chemistry of the Environment (ACE) and are held in a different European city each year: EMEC17 in Inverness follows successful events held in 2014 in Brno (Czech Republic) and 2015 in Torino (Italy).

EMEC17 was based at Eden Court Theatre on the banks of the River Ness in the city centre. The meeting commenced in Highland style with a blast on the bagpipes and then welcomes



from Prof Stuart Gibb (Chairman, EMEC17 Scientific & Organising Committees), Prof Jan Schwarzbauer (retiring President, ACE) and Prof Crichton Lang (Deputy Principal, University of the Highlands and Islands). A musical welcome was provided by students from UHI's traditional music course, followed by a lively demonstration of traditional highland dance by the girls of Fraser School of Dancing.

With the welcome ceremony complete, the scientific

programme got underway with podium and poster presentations providing delegates new insights into some contemporary issues and challenges in environmental chemistry. In addition, the scientific programme featured three key-note lectures from internationally renowned scientists:

- Professor Phillip Whitfield, University of the Highlands and Islands: "*A Matter of Fat: The Development and Application of Lipidomic Workflows*" in which he examined the potential of lipidomics to provide new insights in environmental chemistry.
- Professor Mike Billett, University of Stirling: "*Advances in Environmental Chemistry - Opening the Black Box of Peatland Carbon Cycling*", in which he explored how significant advances in recent years (especially in radiocarbon dating of different carbon species) has led to a major change in our understanding of how carbon is stored, processed and released from organic-rich soils.

- Professor Jörg Feldmann, University of Aberdeen: “*Should We Bother About Elemental Speciation in Environmental Studies?*”. The lecture introduced the concept and significance of elemental speciation and explained the different approaches used to determine the molecular structure of metals and metalloids in different environments.



Almost 40 podium presentations were delivered at EMEC17. An array of high-quality posters were also on display throughout the conference and were highlighted during the conference reception sponsored by Highland Council and attended by the Provost of Inverness - Councillor Helen Carmichael. The Provost welcomed ‘so many expert minds that work on world-wide environmental issues to the Highlands of Scotland where we greatly prize our very special and unique environments’ with the traditional Gaelic greeting “*Ceud Mile Fàilte - A Hundred Thousand Welcomes to all the delegates.*”

EMEC17 also featured a special session on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December organised with partners from the EU’s ERDF Interreg VB Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme ‘*Circular Ocean*’ project. The #ChemHack Challenge Hack sought to address some of the issues surrounding the use anti-foulants on fishing nets and ropes. The ‘Circular Ocean’ project was recently awarded the EU’s 2016 RegioStars ‘Public Choice’ Award for project originality and innovation.

Following completion of the scientific programme on the second day of EMEC17, delegates were joined by special guests ‘Dosan the 28<sup>th</sup>’ and ‘Dosan the 30<sup>th</sup>’ from Leys Castle Estate for a group photograph before heading out on conference tours.

Delegates were able to choose from a trip to the ancient ruins of Urquhart Castle perched above the mysterious Loch Ness where the famous monster “Nessie” is said to reside, or, to visit Glen Ord whisky distillery for a tour and to and sample their malt whiskies produced exclusively for markets in Asia.



Throughout, the conference provided a forum for the exchange of ideas on recent advances in research and development in environmental chemistry and technology, for people from academia, research, and industry. The event provided a forum for lively discussion and networking with colleagues from across Europe and beyond.

The scientific component of the conference drew to a close with a preview of the 18<sup>th</sup> European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry to be held in Porto (Portugal) and presentations to ACE Scholarship recipients and 'Early Career' researcher awards. However, for those delegates attending the conference dinner and Cèilidh at the Victorian Pavillion at Strathpeffer, there was a full evening of food, drink, music and dance ahead!



We sincerely hope that EMEC17 in Inverness instigated new collaborations as well as providing the opportunity to renew contacts with old friends from the EMEC community. We also hope that the full social programme allowed delegates to experience and enjoy some of the culture, food and drink of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland – certainly, the feedback received since the event has been incredibly positive!

We look forward to seeing you all again in Porto for EMEC18.

*EMEC17 Organising Committee*