

LOCAL SCIENCE GROUP TO CLOSE AFTER 50 YEARS

The Tayside & Fife Branch of the British Science Association has been organising local public science events for over 50 years, but has decided to close down at its Branch AGM today [Wednesday 3rd July].

Created in 1968 when the national Festival of Science was last held in Dundee, the Branch is best known locally for its annual programme of free science lectures for the public. This has attracted many nationally- and internationally-renowned speakers over the years, including astronomer Patrick Moore, neuroscientist Baroness Greenfield, Nobel laureate chemist Sir Harry Kroto and BBC weather presenter Heather Reid, as well as many expert speakers from local universities, hospitals and beyond. The Branch also held many special events for local schools, and has taken part in many science festivals across the region, as well as organising some special visits to sites such as Mossmorran, Torness nuclear power station and Rosyth Dockyard to see *HMS Queen Elizabeth* when she was under construction. The Branch was one of the most active in the UK, and for many years also contributed a Branch member to the elected national governing Council of the Association. The branch's final public lecture took place in June, and was given by local forensic scientist Prof Niamh nic Daeid.

The national Association feels that the original role of its network of branches is now less relevant, as outreach to the public is now a condition of much of science research funding. It wants the branches to now focus on taking science to members of the public who currently have no interest in science.

Branch chairman Brian Kelly said "Our current activities have been successful and well supported by both our volunteers and members of the public, but we feel that we do not have the expertise to successfully engage the audiences that the national Association want us to reach, and so, reluctantly, we have decided to close the branch. I would like to thank everyone who has supported us and attended our events over the years, and especially the Universities of Dundee and Abertay which have hosted many of our events." Most of the other branches across the UK are also closing down due to the new national focus.

Branch treasurer Iain Murray has been involved with the Association for more than 30 years, and last year won its Walter Bodmer Award for his contribution to the work of the branch. He said, "The branch members are very disappointed that the national Association is no longer supporting our activities which have been very successful locally, but individually we will continue to support other local events, such as Cafe Science Dundee and the science festivals".

For more information on this story, please contact Dr Iain Murray, Branch Treasurer:

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