

CEP 2026 CONFERENCE

26th & 27th May
Claudelands, Hamilton

CEP - Celebrating 25 years in 2026



MEDIA RELEASE

13th May 2026

The Nuclear Elephant

World head to speak at Hamilton conference

New Zealand is in an energy crisis. We are still dependent on gas that's all but run out and imported coal to prop up the electricity system and keep the lights on, both of which carry significant emissions implications as we approach 2030 and those financial liabilities arising from missing Paris targets.

Meanwhile, the energy world is buzzing over the potential for small modular reactors (SMRs) and microreactors (MMRs), according to CEP CEO Mike Hopkins. "Here in New Zealand, we have an aversion to nuclear energy – and for very good reasons – but the rest of the world is seeing nuclear, and especially SMRs and MMRs, as a low carbon, quick solution to powering data centres and regional grids. Meta, Google, Amazon and the like are all investing in nuclear energy. Nuclear start-ups receive around a fifth of all climate venture funding", said Hopkins.

"France has just published a roadmap to be completely fossil fuel free by 2050 and the backbone of its transition is nuclear powered electricity. As a country, we need to be better informed on what all that fuss is about and we've invited the head of the World Nuclear Association, Dr Sama Bilbao y León, to bring us up to date on why so many countries, regions and multinationals are turning to nuclear to help satisfy their insatiable energy hunger," continued Hopkins.

In announcing the Keynote, Hopkins said: "CEP is all about education and knowledge and our conference encourages healthy discussion. We expect Dr Bilbao y León to receive robust questioning from our delegates. Yes, we expect her to convey the benefits of nuclear power but equally we encourage hard questions from the audience around safety, disposal and long-term value for money. We need to take the emotion out of the nuclear power debate and it's important New Zealand understands whether the latest developments in the field are relevant to our energy landscape."

In the interest of sustainability, Dr Bilbao y León will not be attending the conference in person but appearing via live, video-link from London. The CEP conference is being held on the 26th and 27th May at Claudelands, Hamilton.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About Dr Sama Bilbao y León

Sama leads a team of experts, analysts and communicators working to enable the growth of the global nuclear sector by connecting players across the nuclear value chain, shaping and representing the industry's position in key world forums, providing authoritative information and influencing key audiences, organisations and media.

Sama has more than 25 years of experience in nuclear engineering and energy policy. Sama has a very diverse professional experience having worked in the nuclear industry, in academia and in international organisations such as the IAEA and the OECD/NEA.

Sama was one of the seven founders of the North American Young Generation in Nuclear (NAYGN). She was also one of the key individuals involved in the creation and development of the thriving Nuclear Engineering programme at Virginia Commonwealth University, the only ABET accredited undergraduate programme in the state.

Sama has BS, MS and PhD degrees in Nuclear Engineering from Polytechnic of Madrid and University of Wisconsin, as well as an MBA from Averett.



For an electronic copy of Dr Bilbao y Leon's photo or for further information on the Conference, contact:

Dr Mike Hopkins

Tel: 04 385 2839

email: mike.hopkins@cep.org.nz

web: www.cep.org.nz

To discuss [sponsorship or exhibition opportunities](#), please contact:

Philip Le Quesne

Tel: 021 055 8788

email: philip.lequesne@cep.org.nz

Carbon and Energy Professionals New Zealand is a member based, not for profit, incorporated society for energy and carbon reduction professionals. CEP provides certification of competence services to the sector and supports its members through a range of activities that raise skills, knowledge and all-round competence in energy and carbon management.