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Press Release

18 November 2011

**Upland science makes an “X factor” impact at Gateshead**

Scientists from Aberdeen, Leeds, Durham, Sheffield and Sussex universities showed that they have got what it takes to make an impact when they were presented with the Rural Economy and Land Use Award at The Sage, Gateshead on 16 November.

The team of natural and social scientists designed a research project to help upland communities understand the social and environmental changes that are happening in our hills and what the options are for the future. The results have had impacts in economic and business contexts and been used by companies such as Yorkshire Water, Premier Waste Plc and United Utilities. The project has also helped our understanding of the importance of peatlands for storing carbon.

At the “Who should run the countryside?” conference organised by the UK Research Councils Relu Programme, business people, policymakers and scientists voted to decide the winner “X factor” style.

The conference was celebrating the achievements of a £25 million interdisciplinary programme investigating the challenges facing rural areas. Projects have been researching topics as diverse as the potential for farm-scale energy production, why endemic diseases persist in livestock, the implications of European legislation on water quality, how visitors to the countryside can be informed effectively about disease risks and much more.

Stakeholders have been involved throughout all the Relu projects. These are the people in the worlds of business and government policy who will be making use of the results. Carrying on this theme of involvement, a panel of stakeholders has shortlisted the finalists in the contest, and at the conference everyone had the opportunity to watch films about the projects then vote to decide on the winners.

Vice chancellor of Liverpool University Sir Howard Newby who presented the award said: “The uplands provide many vital resources, including grazing for food animals, storage for carbon, clean water supplies, and facilities for leisure, as well as a very rich ecology.

“Environmental and social change in the uplands has implications for all of us and this project has helped our understanding of these changes, and enabled people who live in and make use of the uplands to make more informed choices.”

Notes for editors:

1. [More information about the winning project](http://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/sustainableuplands) may be found on the project website.
2. A film about the project may be viewed and films of other finalists in the Relu Awards are also available on the [Relu website](http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Majorprogrammeevents.htm).
3. The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), with additional funding provided by the Scottish Government and Defra. See [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) for more information about the Relu programme.
4. For any further information contact anne.liddon@ncl.ac.uk , tel 0191 222 6903.

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Notes for editors:

1. More information about the winning project may be found on [the Relu website.](http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Hubacek.htm)
2. A photo of the presentation is attached and may be used for publication.
3. The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), with additional funding provided by the Scottish Government and Defra. See [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) for more information about the Relu programme.
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