

RELU goes to Brussels to debate the importance of CAP reform for rural development.

On 7 December RELU Director Philip Lowe and Project Leader Michael Winter debated with European Commission official Peter Berkowitz the importance of CAP reform to rural development. Philip argued that, from the experience of both the UK and the operation of the Rural Development Regulation (the so-called Second Pillar of the CAP) across Europe, it was evident that in practice farm-based diversification made a limited contribution to the diversity of rural economies, which depended more on the potential for growth of other sectors in rural settings. There was agreement that a significant contribution that farming could make was in maintaining a landscape and cultural heritage that was attractive to tourists and incomers and in providing a series of desirable environmental services on which a thriving rural economy would depend. Berkowitz who has played a leading role in designing the Agenda 2000 and Mid-Term Review reforms of the CAP was able to explain how the new European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (the latest version of the Second Pillar) would address some of the issues raised. The event was organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research as part of their New Rural Agenda project.