



## Relu news

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### **1 Researcher scoops ESRC award to connect UK uplands and Kalahari drylands**

Mark Reed, researcher on Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project is joint winner of the ESRC Michael Young Prize, "rewarding the very best early career social scientists whose research has the potential to make a positive and far-reaching impact beyond academia". He has looked into the impact of changing environments on the people that live and work in the UK uplands and Kalahari drylands. The findings are important for semi-arid zones as land degradation and climate change are threatening future global food security, biodiversity and carbon stores. By focusing on anticipating, monitoring and adapting to future change in these different environments, the research can enable the residents to adapt effectively, to protect not only their livelihoods but also ecosystems that they often depend on. The £3000 prize will be used to communicate with residents in the UK uplands and Kalahari drylands through online podcast videos, translated booklets and research briefings.

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/Young/index.aspx?ComponentId=26376&SourcePagelD=31032>

### **2 Defra demonstration projects will draw on flooding research**

Defra has just announced £247,000 of new funding for a demonstration project in flood risk management, prompted by work carried out by Relu researchers in Ryedale, which has experienced serious recurrent flooding events over the past ten years. The *Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies* team has shown that some rural land management approaches could reduce flood risk in downstream areas, especially where more conventional measures (such as defences) fail standard cost-benefit analyses. The initiative will be led by Forest Research and aims to slow down the progress of flood water from upper catchment areas into rivers and watercourses in Pickering and Sinnington.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Whatmore.htm>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2009/flood-0318.htm>

### **3 What's fair about the countryside?**

Rural parts of Redcar and Cleveland could be the worst place to live in the English countryside, in environmental terms, according to researchers at the University of York. But it depends on exactly where you are, because Redcar and Cleveland also comes out as the most environmentally unequal, with some groups enjoying much more desirable surroundings than others. Relu researchers discussed their work on inequalities and fairness in rural areas with stakeholders from local government and other organisations at a Social and Environmental Inequalities in Rural England seminar in Northallerton, organised by Relu researcher Meg Huby and team.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/whats%20fair%20about%20the%20countryside.doc>

### **4 Book now for Future of Rural Land Use conference**

There are still a few places available on Relu's Future of Rural Land Use conference in London on 4 June but it is filling up very quickly. Rounding up at the conference will now be undertaken by Tom Tew, Natural England's Chief Scientist and Natural England are kindly sponsoring a networking buffet at the end of the day. See [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) for programme and booking.

### **5 Relu research supports uplands inquiry**

The Commission for Rural Communities is conducting a major enquiry into the future for England's upland communities, and Relu researchers are providing it with detailed evidence. The inquiry is jointly chaired by Stuart Burgess, the Prime Minister's Rural Advocate and Relu researcher Professor Michael Winter who is a CRC Commissioner. Four Relu projects have been involved in a series of thematic seminars to inform the inquiry: *The Sustainability of Hill Farming*; *Social and Environmental Inequalities in Rural Areas*; *Sustainable Uplands - Learning to Manage Future Change*; and *Implications of a Nutrition Driven Food Policy for the Countryside*.

### **6 Relu researcher appointed to Defra Science Advisory Council**

Relu researcher Michael Winter has been appointed to the Defra Science Advisory Council. Members are selected for their breadth of scientific knowledge across the range of topics covered in Defra's remit. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/sac/advisory04.htm>

### **7 Relu focuses on the regional land use agenda**

Relu has been taking a look at the implications of its research for regional land use, a level of analysis largely missing from the ongoing national strategic review. Strategic land use, for

example, should be central to the Integrated Regional Strategies that English Regional Development Agencies will have to prepare and it is important that they be informed by the latest research. Two major events with a regional focus took place during National Science and Engineering Week/Festival of Social Science. "Rural Land Use in the North" a joint Relu/Northern Rural Network seminar in York was chaired by Sir Don Curry (read report at link below) "Land for the Future" an equivalent event for the south west, was organised by Relu researcher Michael Winter at Exeter University. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/Future%20Challenges%20notes.doc>

### **8 Researchers in forefront of Phytophthora fightback**

Defra has commissioned a review from Relu researchers in the lead into a major emergency programme to contain and eradicate *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae*. The funding has been allocated to Clive Potter from Imperial College and team, who are working on the Relu project '*Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in assessing the threat from Sudden Oak Death*'. This initiative will look at previous disease management actions in the run up to the inter-departmental eradication programme and provides a significant opportunity for Relu to inform disease management policy. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Potter.htm>

### **9 Ecology embraces social sciences**

The Journal of Applied Ecology has explored for the first time how ecology relates to the social sciences, in a special interdisciplinary profile. This collection of papers from Relu projects includes contributions from across the breadth of Relu's land and water research. They may be accessed on line at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117972213/home>

### **10 First cross-programme paper published - on stakeholder analysis**

Researchers from four Relu-funded projects have published the first cross-programme paper in the latest issue of Journal of Environmental Management. Pooling expertise and experience from across the programme about methods for stakeholder analysis, the paper provides analysis and guidance about how to identify, categorise and explore relationships between stakeholders. Access this online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2009.01.001>, or contact Mark Reed [m.s.reed@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:m.s.reed@leeds.ac.uk).

### **11 Relu Director advises on future of rural vet profession**

Philip Lowe, Director of the Relu Programme, has chaired a Working Group for Defra, the devolved governments, the veterinary profession and the farming industry, on the future of veterinarians in the farming and food sectors. The report he is preparing will be an independent one, but relates to the work of the Relu Programme on the management of animal diseases, and the means of knowledge exchange between research and practice. The report will be published by Defra in May.

### **12 Tiny things matter in E coli research**

Researchers Helen Gordon and Colette Jones on the Reducing *Escherichia coli* O157 risk in rural communities project produced a short film "Tiny things matter" which was shown at a Discovery Day at Satrosphere Science Centre in Aberdeen. It was seen by 743 visitors from all over Aberdeenshire, including families with children who had experienced E coli and who shared their own stories with the researchers. Making the film became a research question in itself: how is E. coli O157 risk communicated using visual media? And became a practical tool to answer another of the projects research questions: who are the key stakeholder groups in relation to E. coli O157 risk? Extracts from the film will shortly be available from the project website as vodcasts <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/reluecoliproject/> Meanwhile, researchers from the same project, based at Bangor University, were also talking about bugs in "Food bugs me to death" sessions with schools, designed to help youngsters learn more about science and the pathogens that can make food go off.

### **13 Researchers contribute to long-term thinking on agricultural land use change**

The land use model and valuation work being undertaken as part of the Relu *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* project is exciting policymakers at Defra. After an initial meeting in December Ian Bateman and Carlo Fezzi were asked to give a two day series of presentations and meetings in January which identified areas where the research could help decision making, including revision of agricultural policy and climate change and land use. Further meetings are taking place and Ian Bateman is currently a leading author on Defra's forthcoming Guidelines for Benefits Transfer (with Eftec Ltd.). The UK Government's Foresight Programme also visited the project and asked them to contribute to forthcoming work.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Bateman.htm>

#### **14 Beef - the untold story of how milk, meat and muscle shaped the world**

In their newly-published book "Beef", Relu Interdisciplinary Fellow Evan Fraser and coauthor Andrew Rimas tell the story of cattle. From the powerful auroch, a now extinct beast once revered as a mystical totem, to the dairy cows of 17th Century Holland, to the frozen meat patties and growth hormones of today, they deliver an engaging, panoramic view of the cow's long and colourful history. Read more on the Relu website about how the authors were inspired to write the book, and how Evan's research with the Relu programme has influenced it.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/about/beef%20text%20for%20web.doc>

#### **15 Vet nurses inject new expertise**

The Relu project *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* has extended its interdisciplinary reach with the appointment of two veterinary nurses to the team. This brings the number of disciplines represented within the programme to more than 40.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Strachan.htm>

#### **16 Scottish Government contributes E coli funding**

Dr Colin Hunter and colleagues from the Relu *Reducing E coli 0157 Risk in Rural Communities* project will be able to extend their research into mitigating the risk of gastrointestinal pathogens in private water supplies after securing £44,000 from the Scottish Government. The additional research "Evaluation of Private Water Supplies (Scotland) Regulations 2006" will investigate why there is a poor take up of government grants to protect private water supplies, using a synthesis of social and natural science approaches. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Strachan.htm>

#### **17 Audit report cites carbon offsetting initiative**

A report from the National Audit Office on Natural England's role in improving Sites of Special Scientific Interest mentions the proposal from Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project to use carbon offsetting to pay for upland regeneration that could improve the carbon storage capacity of the uplands. This is cited as a positive example of public-private partnerships. [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0708/natural\\_england's\\_role.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0708/natural_england's_role.aspx)

#### **18 History lessons for MPs**

Research carried out by Relu Interdisciplinary Fellow Abigail Woods on the history and policies relating to foot and mouth disease, and the Relu project *Lessons from Dutch elm disease in assessing the lessons for sudden oak death*, led by Clive Potter, are both cited in the parliamentary POSTnote 323 Lessons from History.

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/postpn323.pdf>

#### **19 Relu down under**

On a two day visit to the Department of Primary Industries in Orange, New South Wales, Wyn Grant was asked to give an impromptu seminar to departmental staff on Relu and the *Governance of Livestock Diseases* project. He has been touring Australia to learn from Commonwealth and state experience of animal disease management strategies and animal welfare. Brian Ilbery and Damian Maye presented two papers on behalf of the Relu *Assessing the Potential Rural Impact of Plant Disease* project at the Annual Conference of the Agri-Food Research Network in Sydney, Australia. The first paper presented by Damian discussed risk perceptions, farmer knowledge and plant disease management and the second paper presented by Brian considered whether Australia and New Zealand can take any lessons from the wider Relu research programme. The papers were preceded by a lively panel discussion about the value of interdisciplinary research strategies to tackle rural economy and land use issues.

#### **20 Would healthy eating be bad news for farmers?**

The Relu project *Implications of a Nutrition Driven Food Policy for the Countryside* set out to examine how the UK could produce healthy foods that consumers wish to buy at prices they are willing to pay and to assess the impact on land use and the rural environment and economy. Their research shows that, if we assume that the percentage of imports will remain constant, many more acres of intensive production under polythene tunnels would be needed in order to produce the quantity of fruit and vegetables for the recommended healthy diet. At the same time, areas which are most suited to grazing animals rather than growing crops would suffer a severe decline. This could mean unemployment and abandonment of upland areas. Smaller farms would disappear and be absorbed into larger land holdings. Upstream industries would suffer, particularly feed suppliers, and there would be a knock-on effect on the wider rural economy of the uplands. Read about the policy

implications of their research in Relu's Policy and Practice Note no 6 at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/PPN6%20Traill.pdf> or email [relu@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:relu@ncl.ac.uk) for hard copies.

## 21 Relu people

- **Ian Bateman** from Relu's *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* will speak to the water industry as part of the forthcoming Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management annual conference in April and will give a keynote speech at the international European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists conference in Amsterdam in June.
- **Jeff Waage** is now leading the new London International Development Centre, a combined research effort of 6 colleges and 400 scientists, building interdisciplinary research, which has been influenced in its development by the Relu model.
- **Angela Karp** who has been leading the Relu project *Impacts of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops* has been appointed Scientific Director of the £27 million Centre for Bioenergy and Climate Change at Rothamsted Research. She has just returned from Berlin where she gave a presentation about the Relu research at the international conference "Biomass in future landscapes – Sustainable use of biomass and spatial development".
- **Mark Reed and Lindsay Stringer** researchers on Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project have been invited to join a Working Group developing a state-of-the-art research synthesis that will feed into the next Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in November 2009.
- **Klaus Hubacek** from the Relu *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project will be giving a seminar in the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University on 28 May at 1 pm titled 'Ecosystem services in dynamic and contested landscapes - an interdisciplinary perspective'. Please email [relu@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:relu@ncl.ac.uk) if you would like to attend.
- **Brian Ilbery**, co-investigator on *Assessing the Potential Rural Impact of Plant Disease* will be giving his inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Gloucestershire "Food supply chains: the long and short of it" on Tuesday 28 April at 6 pm in TCO14, University of Gloucestershire, The Park, Cheltenham.
- **Norval Strachan** (University of Aberdeen) has taken over the role of lead Principal Investigator on the Relu project "*Reducing E. coli O157 risk in rural communities.*"
- Relu Director **Philip Lowe** has been elected as a member of the Academy of Social Sciences.

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