

Relu news



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1 Future of rural land use on the agenda

Strategic land use is being driven up the political agenda by public concerns over climate change, flood risk, food security and sustainable energy supplies and it is a major focus for the Relu programme. Relu's researchers represent the largest pool of academic expertise on land and water in the UK and in a major conference on 4 June 2009 they will present and discuss their research with key figures from commercial and statutory organisations. There will also be opportunities to sample cutting-edge methodologies researchers are using to investigate the future of our countryside. Click onto latest news at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/> to find out more and book a place. Closing date for applications 24 April 2009.

2 Science Week events across the UK

Events will be taking place across the UK during Festival of Social Science/National Science and Engineering Week. Contributions from the Relu programme will include:

- "Land for the Future" a workshop involving regional development agencies and other organisations on Monday 9 March in Exeter, organised by Michael Winter.
- "Rural Land Use in the North of England: Future Challenges" a workshop also looking at the regional implications of land use research, on Thursday 12 March, in York in partnership with the Northern Rural Network.

- "How will bioenergy crops affect our landscapes?" on Tuesday 10 March hosted by Angela Karp, who is leading the "*Impacts of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops*". This event combines short talks and interactive displays at Rothamsted Research in Harpenden, on the positive and negative implications of planting more biomass crops in the landscape.
- "Making deer choices: public preferences for deer management" will take place in Monmouth on Tuesday 10 March and Ullapool on Thursday 12 March. Piran White and researchers from *Collaborative Deer Management* will be using choice experiments to investigate public views at this event.
- "Food for the future - what is the role of organics?" will take place on 13 March. Sigrid Stagl and the team working on *The Effects of Scale in Organic Agriculture* are planning events at the universities of Sussex, Cambridge and Leeds.
- "Food bugs me to death" events are being organised at schools in North Wales by Bangor-based researchers from the *Reducing E Coli 0157 Risk in Rural Communities* project.
- Aberdeen-based researchers on the same project will be launching their film "Political Pathogen", exploring diverse views on the risk of E coli O157. The film will be available on their website and shown in schools and community venues.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/FestScience09.html>

3 Researchers influence policy on Lyme disease

Researchers on the project *Assessing and Communicating Animal Disease Risks for Countryside Users* have been in demand from policymakers and organisations in the UK and beyond. Sarah Randolph (University of Oxford) was invited by Hugo Swire, MP for East Devon, to sit on the expert panel at a Parliamentary seminar on Lyme disease, that was organised by MPs in response to pressure from members of the patients' support group Lyme Disease Action. Chris Quine (Forest Research) attended a meeting on Ticks and Lyme Disease at the Scottish Parliament, called by Minister for Environment Michael Russell to update a range of bodies on the Relu project's progress on looking at current communication on risk of Lyme disease to professionals and the public.

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

4 Relu researcher speaks at United Nations

David Uzzell (University of Surrey) from the *Assessing and Communicating Animal Disease Risks for Countryside Users* project was invited to speak at the United Nations to an audience of Member States, United Nations officials as well as psychologists on 'Human Behaviour and Climate Change: A Social Justice Issue'. This was part of a half-day briefing on 'Psychology and Social Justice Related to the UN Global Agenda' to inform the UN about current applied psychological and social research on the mitigation of climate change, adaptation to changing environments and the reduction of suffering especially in respect of physical and mental health.

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

5 Could environmental cooperatives pay dividends?

Environmental cooperatives can deliver benefits to farmers and to the environment, according to the Dutch experience. An article by Jeremy Franks who led a Relu project on *Cooperative Management of the Agricultural Environment* responds to Relu Director Philip Lowe's Birkbeck lecture "Whose land is it anyway?" <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Birkbeck.pdf> and argues that cooperatives could help to address environmental issues at catchment and landscape scale in the UK.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/Environmental%20co-op.pdf>

6 Residents experiment with hydrological modelling

Over 200 people attended the Relu *Knowledge Controversies* event in Ryedale, North Yorkshire, in October, to celebrate the conclusion of the project's first case study, looking at the area's flooding problems, and publication of their report "Making space for people". They had an opportunity to find out about this way of "doing science differently", watch video clips and try their hands at hydrological modelling. See <http://knowledge-controversies.ouce.ox.ac.uk> to read the document and media coverage of the event.

7 Pesticides go green at European Parliament

In December David Chandler and Wyn Grant from the *The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides* project gave evidence to the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development on the consequences of the "cut off" criteria for pesticides - hazardous properties that can result in a substance being banned - and the biological alternatives. The presentation stimulated considerable interest amongst MPs.

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

8 Integrated Management of Floodplains in print

Researchers on Relu's *Integrated Management of Floodplains* team (Helena Posthumus, Jim Rouquette, Joe Morris, Tim Hess, David Gowing and Quentin Dawson) have contributed a chapter: "Integrated land and water management in floodplains in England" to a new book: "Flood Risk Management: Research and Practice" edited by P Samuels, S Huntingdon, W Allsop, and J Harrop and published by CRC Press / Balkema, ISBN 978-0-415-48507-4.

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

9 BBSRC review recommends building on Relu experience

The recently published review of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's research relevant to climate change, which aims to prepare the bioscience community for the Living With Environmental Change programme, recommends building on the experience of Relu. The report says: "research should build on experience from the Rural Economy and Land Use cross-research council programme to study the interactions of social and economic factors with management for biodiversity in agricultural systems" and comments that Relu "broke new ground in forging collaborations of biological and environmental science with social and economic research".

http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/reviews/scientific_areas/0810_environmental_change.pdf

10 Relu in China

The Relu project *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* is reaching eastwards. Principal Investigator Ian Bateman was invited to give a plenary address to the Conference on Ecosystem Services in China and the US, held at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. This conference marks the opening of the Joint US-China Center on Ecosystem Services (JUCCES) funded by the US-EPA and the Chinese authorities. Researchers from the project have been invited to head a new JUCCES research programme on the problems of water supply in rapidly developing areas of China. They will also be involved as partners in a new project examining the ecosystem services of the Tibetan Plateau which supplies water to some three billion people in countries throughout South-East Asia. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Bateman.htm>

11 Animal welfare policy workshop at Warwick

At this workshop on 6 May 2009, organised by the Relu *Governance of Livestock Disease* project, the programme will include Sophia Rizvi, veterinary adviser for farm animal welfare at Defra, Rob Garner, political scientist, University of Leicester, Abigail Woods, veterinary historian, Imperial College and Martin Green, Professor of Cattle Production and Epidemiology, University of Nottingham. For more information and on-line booking see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/whri/newsandevents/>

12 Notes on manure recycling and food chain risks now available

Relu Policy and Practice Notes No 4 "Safe recycling of livestock manures" and No 5 "Stakeholder participation in the management and communication of food chain risks" are now available. Download them from <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policyandpracticenotes.htm> or contact relu@ncl.ac.uk for hard copies.

13 Parliamentary Office notes lessons on river basin management

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) which produces authoritative briefing notes for MPs on contemporary science and technology issues has drawn on Relu research in its latest POSTnote on River Basin Management Plans. The programme is specifically cited regarding stakeholder engagement, lessons from other European countries, engaging planning authorities and costs arising from land use changes.

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/postpn320.pdf>

14 Relu people

- **Charles Banks**, who is leading Relu's *Energy Production on Farms Through Anaerobic Digestion* project took part in a UK-China workshop on "Circular Agriculture: Science, Technology and Policy" at Northwest A&F University, Yangling, Shaanxi Province, China as part of the launch of the China-UK Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network (SAIN) in November.
http://www.rcuk.cn/rcuk/fore/s_workshop_cnt_en.php?pgm_id=77
- Relu Director **Philip Lowe's** 2008 Cameron Gifford Lecture "Landscapes of Endeavour and Enquiry" is now available. If you would like a copy of this public address, given before the Duke of Northumberland, the Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University and 200 members of the Northern Rural Network contact relu@ncl.ac.uk tel 0191 2226903.
- **Laurence Smith** who is leading Relu's *Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources* project presented "Wily Solutions for Wicked Problems: Investigating Sustainable Protection of Water Resources" at a conference on land use, climate change, and water resources', held in November at Cornell University Law School, USA.
- **Wyn Grant** and **Justin Greaves** from the *Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides* and the *Governance of Livestock Disease* projects presented a paper on their experience of the Relu programme entitled 'Interdisciplinary Research: Some Practical, Methodological and Philosophical Reflections' at a workshop at the University of Manchester in December 2008 on Transdisciplinarity: Working Across Boundaries organised under the auspices of the ESRC Stem Cell Initiative.

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