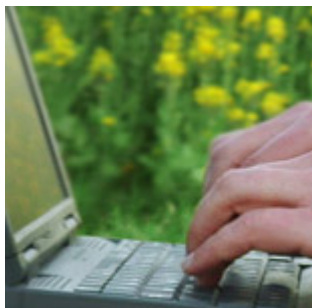


Relu news



July 2008

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1 Can animal and plant disease management learn from each other?

A Relu workshop on animal and plant disease brought together researchers, policy makers and commercial organisations in May, in line with Relu's aim to bring natural and social sciences to bear on problems and set new agendas. A report on the workshop may be found on the Relu website

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Relu%20Animal%20and%20Plant%20Disease%20Workshop%20report%20for%20circ%20final.doc>. Six Relu projects on animal and plant disease took part. Discussions on what animal and plant disease management can learn from each other, what history can tell us and how responsibilities are assigned, occasioned lively debate, and valuable connections were made between researchers

and stakeholders via “speed dating” sessions. The next step will be to draw together an expert group of stakeholders to comment regularly on, and contribute to, the research projects.

2 Researchers contribute to England's soil strategy

Relu researchers working on the project Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change have put together a response to Defra’s consultation on a draft soil strategy for England. You can read their comments at:

<http://homepages.see.leeds.ac.uk/~lecmsr/sustainableuplands/Sustainable%20Uplands%20project%20response%20to%20DEFRA's%20Soil%20Strategy.doc>

3 Modelling where faecal indicator organisms will hit the fan

Researchers at the Centre for Research into Environment and Health (CREH) at Aberystwyth working on the Relu project Modelling the Impact of the Water Framework Directive have been leading on the modelling of faecal indicator organism concentrations in watercourses. These represent the first generic faecal indicator organism models to be developed for the UK that incorporate human and livestock population data as predictor variables. Further research will predict variations in concentrations of these organisms across the initial project case study area of the Humber catchment, and investigate the impacts of different scenarios for agriculture, such as changes in stocking densities.

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

4 Taking the long view on landscape change

Human timescales often aren’t appropriate for understanding and managing habitat change. Relu interdisciplinary fellow Althea Davies has carried out a review, bringing together palaeoenvironmental and historical information relevant to current UK upland management and conservation, which shows how a longer timescale often lends a different perspective and emphasises the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding processes of change. For example, putting current debates on moorburn into a longer context shows that increased use of fire during the 20th century is often just the most recent phase of intensification which has been happening since the 19th or even late 18th century, and must raise questions over what levels are ecologically sustainable for the future. The review can be downloaded from http://www.sbes.stir.ac.uk/people/davies/documents/upland_history_08.pdf. Comments would be welcome and should be sent to a.l.davies@stir.ac.uk.

5 Spreading the word on fishy feasibility

The Relu project Warm Water Fish Production as a Diversification Strategy for Arable Farmers has been awarded £5,000 from the University of the Highlands and Islands HI Links project to support knowledge transfer activities. The grant will pay for a feasibility study with a farmer on the west coast of Scotland. The HI Links project aims to help businesses in the Highlands and Islands through greater access to the

expertise available in Scotland's research institutions. The project has also been approached by Scottish Enterprise to contribute Relu research findings to the development of regional aquaculture in the borders/ South Scotland area. This initiative includes identifying small to medium sized enterprises interested in producing tilapia, then providing support and mentoring for them to implement the necessary technology and identify markets.

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

6 Putting knowledge brokers under the microscope

Jeremy Phillipson, Assistant Director of the Relu programme is leading an ESRC-funded project entitled 'Science in the Field: Understanding the Changing Role of Expertise in the Rural Economy'. This 2.5 year project, which began in June 2008, will explore the current and potential role of field-level advisers as knowledge brokers between scientific research and land management practice, focusing on three different groups: applied ecologists, rural vets and surveyors/land agents. The researchers will be interviewing investigators on Relu projects about their experiences of knowledge transfer and their understanding of the relationship between science and practice.

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cre/research/science_in_the_field.htm

7 Data Support Service provides a model

Staff from the Environmental Protection Agency in Ireland have visited the Relu Data Support service at the UK Data Archive to learn from Relu's approach to and experiences with data management and data archiving. The Research Information Network, which was set up to lead and co-ordinate the provision of research information in the UK, has also used the Relu data support service as a case study for its report on data publishing/sharing "To Share or Not to Share: Publication and Quality Assurance of Research Data Outputs" <http://www.rin.ac.uk/data-publication>. The Relu Data Support Service website may be found at <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/relu/>.

8 How to maximise agri environmental outcomes

The Relu project Improving the Success of Agri Environment Schemes has been cited as an example of good practice to help Entry Level Scheme agreement holders improve their understanding of the management options and maximise the delivery of outcomes.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/es-report.pdf>

9 Reflecting on interdisciplinarity

Relu is building a new section of the programme website which invites reflections on and discussion about interdisciplinarity. Daniel Sandars from the Relu project Management Options for Biodiverse Farming has provided one of the first articles. He explained: "Last year I attended the Relu young researcher's master-class on interdisciplinary science at the BA festival of science at York. It struck me then that my own profession, Operational Research, should have a lot, to contribute to interdisciplinarity, but does (or has) it? The answer seems to be that it had

an essential relationship with interdisciplinarity and that it could contribute a lot. However, realising that potential is not trivial in light of the fact that Operational Research has lost most of its interdisciplinarity along the way." See

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/Discussions%20on%20interdisciplinarity.html>

Comments and further contributions should be sent to relu@ncl.ac.uk.

10 Telegraph readers wax lyrical on Dutch elm disease

More than 100 Daily Telegraph readers emailed and wrote to the Relu project Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in Assessing the Threat from Sudden Oak Death. They were prompted by an article asking for memories and photographs of the 1970s Dutch elm epidemic and its effects on the landscape. Responses flooded in, with some even in verse. These will all provide an invaluable archive for the researchers. Clive Potter who is heading the project was delighted with the contributions. He said: "This is exactly what we needed and all of the letters and emails will be a great resource for our research. We certainly never expected to get so much useful material from a single article."

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

11 Carbon CREDIT for the uplands

The Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change project hosted a group of stakeholder organisations at a workshop in June to discuss plans to launch a carbon abatement scheme based on peatland restoration. Going under the name CREDIT "Carbon Reduction and Investment Techniques", the group has now drafted a scheme and is setting up a series of projects to support its launch. To find out more, visit their website at: <http://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/credit/>

12 Using Participatory Geographical Information Systems for rural research

Relu researchers from the Social and Environmental Inequalities in Rural Areas project have been looking at how biodiversity could be increased on the York University campus. This was just one activity at their recent seminar on using Participatory Geographical Information Systems (PGIS) for rural research. The seminar provided an overview of the different PGIS techniques available, background case studies from the project team's previous research, the ethical dimensions of PGIS, and the participatory assessment and identification of inequalities using multi-criteria mapping. They will run a second seminar in Bristol in July looking at PGIS as a technique for identifying inequalities and possible inequities in rural England – as perceived by the participants. Results of a participatory mapping exercise they carried out in York during Science Week will also be presented at the Royal Geographic Society – Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference in London in August.

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

13 Rural dimension to summer flooding

The Relu Integrated Management of Flood Plains research team has carried out a collaboratively funded enquiry on the impact of the summer

2007 floods in rural areas of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Yorkshire. The purpose is to explore the 'rural dimension' to flood risk management. Eighty farms and 45 households and 10 businesses located in rural areas have been surveyed. A final report is due in September and papers reporting initial findings have been accepted for the Defra Flood Risk and Coastal Management Conference, Manchester, July 2008, and the European Flood Risk 2008 Conference, Oxford, September 2008.

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/fcmagenda_2061427.pdf

www.floodrisk2008.net

14 Relu forges institutional change

The "Centre for Plant Disease and the Rural Economy" was established at the University of Warwick in 2007 with the objective of bringing together biologists, social scientists and economists to address issues relating to plant diseases and their impacts on land use and the rural economy. It comprises staff from the Central Science Laboratory, the Countryside and Community Research Institute, Imperial College and the University of Warwick. The Centre is working on the Relu project Assessing the Potential Rural Impact of Plant Disease and is currently building a graduate research programme around this core activity. They have now launched their webpage at www.go.warwick.ac.uk/cpdre.

15 Cambridge Conservation Forum forms Relu partnership

Cambridge Conservation Forum held its 2008 Summer Symposium in partnership with Relu at New Hall, Cambridge on the theme Future farming in the UK: global implications for society and biodiversity. Relu researchers contributed with presentations and discussion throughout the day. See <http://www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk> for details of the presentations.

16 Food chains and socio-technical change

A Relu special journal issue of Trends in Food Science and Technology vol 19, no 5: Towards Sustainable Food Chains: Harnessing the Social and Natural Sciences edited by Jeremy Phillipson and Philip Lowe has been published. Relu researchers from a wide range of disciplines, working on the first wave of food chain projects, have contributed to the volume. The contents can be viewed at

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/Towards%20Sustainable%20Food%20Chain%20s.doc>

Copies are available from relu@ncl.ac.uk.

17 Making a meal of biodiversity

The third Relu policy and practice note, Eating Biodiversity: an Investigation of the Links Between Quality Food Production and Biodiversity Protection has now been published. It draws on the findings from the Relu project led by Henry Buller, showing the benefits for farmers, consumers and for the environment of grazing animals on biodiverse pastures. The note may be downloaded from

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/May%20>

[02008%20Henry%20Buller.pdf](#) or contact relu@ncl.ac.uk for hard copies.

18 Wild mammals and the human food chain

Relu and Defra have supported publication of the Proceedings of The Mammal Society Autumn Symposium held at the Zoological Society of London, 25-26 November 2005, edited by Piran White. The theme is wild mammals and the human food chain. See contents:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/JAE%20Special%20Issue.htm>

19 Relu people:

Mark Reed, Project Manager on the Relu project *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* has been awarded an ESRC-SSRC (US Social Science Research Council) collaborative visiting research fellowship. Mark will spend four weeks in the United States exchanging ideas with US researchers about how people interact with landscapes. They aim to develop joint research initiatives modelling the interactions of climate change and human behaviour and using both local and scientific knowledge to explore potential options for adaptation.

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

Richard Shepherd, who leads the Relu project Managing Food Chain Risks has been appointed to the new Social Science Committee of the Food Standards Agency.

Angela Karp and colleagues at Rothamsted Research have been awarded a gold medal at this year's Chelsea Flower show for their exhibit, "Willow Power", which focused on willow as a bioenergy crop that could play an important role in combating climate change. Angela is the Scientific Director of the Centre for Bioenergy and Climate Change at Rothamsted and leads the Relu project "Impacts of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops".

Relu Director **Philip Lowe** met with John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills in May. He was part of a delegation led by Natural Environment Research Council Chief Executive Alan Thorpe to brief the minister on the major new inter-research council programme Living With Environmental Change (LWEC).

Neil Ward, from the Relu Knowledge Controversies project, appeared before the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to give oral evidence to its inquiry into the potential of England's rural economy. He emphasised the diversity of economic activity in rural areas and the difficulties in separating these from the urban, regional and international picture. The Committee explored the rationale for Defra's new Departmental Strategic Objective (DSO), established under the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, for 'strong rural communities'. A draft transcript of the evidence session can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmenvfru/uc544-i/uc54402.htm><http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm20070>

8/cmselect/cmenvfru/uc544-i/uc54402.htm

Tim Hess and Joe Morris from the Relu *Integrated Management of Flood Plains* project are acting as reviewers for the Environment Agency's Catchment Flood Management Planning Process.

www.environment-

agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/cfmp_1426671.pdf

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