



Relu news

July 2009 Contents

1. Speakers take a fresh look at rural land use
2. Funding for Knowledge Exchange Projects: Call for Proposals Now Open
3. A thousand schoolchildren spread the word on food hygiene
4. Food Standards Agency staff digest research
5. Can farmers afford to invest in animal welfare?
6. Upland communities look ahead
7. What's the key to involving stakeholders and partners?
8. 'Street View' takes to the hills
9. Lessons from Loweswater research
10. Measuring the feelgood factor
11. How healthy is your river?
12. New Defra food policy group draws on research expertise
13. Work shadowing shines a light on policymaking
14. Regional development agencies could play key role in rural land use
15. Marie Curie Fellow investigates farmer involvement
16. Transatlantic water links
17. Uplands project tweeting
18. Relu people

1. Speakers take a fresh look at rural land use

As demands on rural land increase and we are all having to deal with the effects of climate change, we may need to take a fresh look at our priorities, according to leading academics at The Future of Rural Land Use conference, organised by Relu on 4 June and chaired by Baroness Young of Old Scone. Around 250 delegates from policymaking, commercial and third sector and academic organisations attended the conference at Congress House in London. Read the report <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Conf%20June%202009/report2.doc> and view presentations at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/events/Conf%20June%202009/June09%20Conf%20Agenda.html>

2. Funding for Knowledge Exchange Projects: Call for Proposals Now Open

A new Relu call for proposals is now open for projects focusing on enabling the transfer and exchange of expertise and knowledge from research funded by the Relu programme. It will enable researchers to engage with non-academic rural-oriented organisations (public bodies, business or third sector organisations) to address policy or practical issues using a range of knowledge exchange mechanisms. The deadline for applications is 30 September 2009.

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/index.htm>

3. A thousand schoolchildren spread the word on food hygiene

Following their recent success during science week, researchers from Bangor University, working on the Relu project *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* will be taking their research out to year 9-11 school students as part of a knowledge transfer programme co-funded by Relu and the Local Authority Research Council Initiative. Students from a dozen schools in North Wales will attend workshops that explore the biology of food-borne pathogens, the level of risk they pose to health and how we can manage our behaviour to reduce that risk. Over a thousand young people are expected to attend over the course of the autumn term and prospective schools are currently being recruited. For further details contact Paul Cross on 012348 382991 or email Paul.Cross@bangor.ac.uk.

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

4. Food Standards Agency staff digest research

The Food Standards Agency has hosted a very successful and popular series of seminars for staff, focusing on Relu research. Researchers from *Managing Food Chain Risk*; *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities*; *Comparative Merits of Consuming Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas* and *Sustainable and Safe Recycling of Livestock Waste* have all presented research results and forged some useful links with policy teams at the FSA. Senior Scientific Officer in the Chief Scientist Team PK Khaira who organised the seminars said: "It was clear that staff are keen to hear about relevant research that is going on in areas of interest."

5. Can farmers afford to invest in animal welfare?

In his opening presentation, practising vet Martin Green from the University of Nottingham, told participants at a workshop on animal welfare on 6 May, that the requirement for cheap food had increased the demand on each cow, increasing the metabolic load five times for a high yielding cow, pushing them to the edge of what is sustainable. The workshop was organised by Relu's *Governance of Livestock Diseases* project at Warwick HRI, with a range of presentations from leading authorities on the topic. Around fifty participants from the livestock industry, stakeholder organisations, government and academia attended the event. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/gld

6. Upland communities look ahead

Researchers from the Relu *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project and project partners Moors for the Future have been awarded £100,000 follow-on funding from ESRC to disseminate findings to people who live in and work in upland landscapes over the next year. The team will be developing workshops, video and written information materials and media engagement to get their messages across. Results from the project will also be feeding into the Scottish Government's "Realising the potential contributions of Scotland's rural land to delivering sustainable economic growth", which will report to the Scottish Government's Land Use Summit later this year.

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

7. What's the key to involving stakeholders and partners?

There are 12 key ingredients to effective collaboration, according to analysis carried out by Relu's *Collaborative Deer Management* project: Interest; Time; Resources; Leadership; Networks; Willingness; Knowledge and information; Communication; Tolerance and flexibility; Trust; Understanding; Power. Collaboration was investigated through interviews and case studies and was found to take many different forms, including government consultation exercises, joint research, the development of best practice guidelines and co-ordinated land management. Preliminary findings were presented by Norman Dandy at a workshop on 'The Ecology and Management of Deer in Wooded Landscapes' at Studland, Swanage in May 2009. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Irvine.htm>

8. 'Street View' takes to the hills

As part of a new Rural Digital Economy Hub at the University of Aberdeen funded by four research councils (EPSRC, ESRC, AHRC and MRC), Mark Reed and Steve Redpath from Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project will be directing the development of a £1.5m online upland ecosystem service atlas that continuously updates in real-time from sensors sending data through mobile phone networks. Building on the success of Google Street View the team plans to develop 'Hill View' in their case study area, where users can click on maps to see 360 degree landscape views, rate views and add their own photos. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/SecondCall/Hubacek.htm>

9. Lessons from Loweswater

Loweswater looks set to inform other local/institutional catchment management initiatives as well as national institutions' approaches to farmer-agency dialogue and exchange. The Relu project *Testing a Community Approach to Catchment Management* and the Loweswater Care Project – a new group created by researchers, locals and institutions as a result of the project - has attracted attention from Ennerdale Water, Crummock Water and Buttermere and the South Cumbria Rivers Trust among others. In May, the project facilitated a workshop on the role of the community in lake management within the International 'Lakes for Living' conference at Windermere.

www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/loweswater

10. Measuring the feelgood factor

A £250K exploratory network 'Behaviour for Well-being, Environment and Life' funded by ESRC with BBSRC/MRC and led by Relu researcher Colin Hunter from *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* with uplands researchers Mark Reed and Christina Prell will investigate how people's interactions with upland environments influence their personal wellbeing. <http://www.relu.ac.uk/research/projects/Third%20Call/Killham.htm>

11. How healthy is your river?

How do you know how healthy your local river is, and whether it is improving? Relu researchers on the Relu project *Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources* think they have come up with the answer - a simple report card, like the one a child brings home at the end of the school year. Consumers are paying for improving our rivers through their water bills, and water companies are gathering a mass of data from monitoring the physical, chemical and biological quality of the water in catchments. The report card draws this information together with simple graphics to indicate the overall ecological health of the river. Read more about the report card in Relu Policy and Practice Note no 7

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Smith%20PP7%20final.pdf>

12. New Defra food policy group draws on research expertise

Bruce Traill who led Relu's *Implications of a Nutrition Driven Food Policy for the Countryside* and Gareth Edwards-Jones who led Relu's *Comparative Merits of Consuming Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas* have both been appointed as members of Defra's Council of Food Policy Advisors. The Council was set up by the Secretary of State to provide advice on a wide range of food policy issues. This reflects the growing importance of food policy, and Defra's new role in co-ordinating it across government.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodrin/policy/council/index.htm>

13. Work shadowing shines a light on policymaking

Wyn Grant from the *Governance of Livestock Diseases* project at Warwick University spent May working in the animal welfare team at Defra as part of the Relu work shadowing scheme. He was able to attend a wide range of meetings and was asked to write a paper on the topic of animal welfare labelling. "I would like to thank the Animal Welfare Team for their inclusive and welcoming approach," he said. "The experience was invaluable for me and for our project. This is the second time I have used the work shadowing scheme and I would strongly recommend it to other Relu researchers."

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

A new round of funding (Deadline 30 September 2009) is available for work shadowing and visiting fellows - see <http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/workshadowing.htm> for details.

14. Regional development agencies could play key role in rural land use

Regional strategies could be the key to fresh thinking on rural land use, suggests One North East's Rural Policy and Partnerships Manager Frances Rowe in the latest Relu Policy and Practice Note. All regional development agencies will be required to produce such plans by 2011 and they will set out a framework for the next 15-20 years. Read Policy and Practice Note no 8, which has been produced as part of a Relu visiting fellowship at <http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/Rowe%20PP8%20final.pdf>

15. Marie Curie Fellow investigates farmer involvement

Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations will mean high compliance costs for large beef and arable farms and may lead some dairy farmers to consider leaving the industry, according to research carried out by Marie Curie Fellow Sandra Barns and Bruce Willoughby, both from New Zealand, who have been working with the Relu project *Impacts of the Water Framework Directive*. Their project used methodology developed in Australia and New Zealand to give an insight into the range of ways farmers may respond to policy by understanding the 'fit' with farming practices. They found that most farmers had low levels of 'involvement' in water quality.

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

16. Transatlantic water links

David Benson, from the Relu *Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources*, has been awarded an ESRC-SSRC Collaborative Visiting Fellowship. The Fellowship will enable the Relu team to engage in comparative analysis of EU/US water governance and will also bring benefits to the wider programme, as David Benson is tasked with fostering comparative understandings amongst other Relu water governance projects.

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

17. Uplands project tweeting

Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* project has joined Twitter. Click onto <http://twitter.com/reluuplands> to read about their latest activities.

18. Relu people

- **Ian Crute** has been appointed to the new post of Chief Scientist to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board. He is currently Director of Rothamsted Research and has been a key stakeholder to the Relu programme.
- **Stephen Hunter**, another long-standing Relu stakeholder and member of the Animal and Plant Disease Forum, has taken up a new post within the Marine Fisheries Agency of Defra as Head of the MFA/Marine Management Organisation Transition Project.
- **John Varley** who sits on Relu's People and the Rural Environment Forum has been appointed by the Secretary of State as a non-executive member of the Environment Agency Board.
- Relu researcher **Sigrid Stagl** is moving to the University of Vienna to take up the Chair of Environmental Economics - the only chair of its kind in Austria.
- **Tony Burton** who, as the National Trust's Director of Policy and Strategy has taken an active part in Relu stakeholder forums and events, is taking up a new role as Director of the Civic Society Initiative.
- **Matt Lobley**, co-investigator on the Relu project *Improving the Success of Agri-environment* gave a presentation "Training and advice for agri-environmental management" to the British Ornithologists' Union conference titled "Habitat is just another crop"
- **Darren Moseley** of Forest Research presented work from the Relu project *Assessing and communicating animal disease risks for countryside users* at the Health and Recreation in Forest and Landscape International Conference, held in Birmensdorf, Switzerland in April 2009.

Rural Economy and Land Use Programme
Centre for Rural Economy
School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
University of Newcastle
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
Tel. 0191 222 6903
Fax: 0191 222 5411
E-mail: relu@ncl.ac.uk