

## Relu news



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### **1. Book now for Who Should Run the Countryside?**

Bookings are now open for Relu's conference "Who Should Run the Countryside" at The Sage, Gateshead, on 16 November 2011. Debates on hot topics such as "21<sup>st</sup> Century Land Ownership: a responsibility or a privilege?", and workshop discussions on issues such as "Environmental modelling: master or servant?" will run alongside a variety of interactive activities. Details and booking on the [Relu website](#) or email [reluconf@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:reluconf@ncl.ac.uk).

### **2. The Relu Awards: come and vote**

Relu is planning an X-Factor style final for the Relu Awards at its conference "Who Should Run the Countryside?" on 16 November at The Sage, Gateshead. Delegates will be able to view films of the project teams and their research, then vote to decide the overall winners in both categories.

Finalists are:

Best Example of Interdisciplinary Methodology and Scientific Innovation:  
[Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies: The Case of Flood Risk Management](#)

[Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) A Participatory Modelling Framework to Support Catchment Management

Best Example of Impact:

[Comparative assessment of environmental, community & nutritional impacts of consuming fruit and vegetables produced locally and overseas](#)

[Sustainable Uplands: learning to manage future change](#)

All the excellent entries from across the Programme will be featured in two Relu briefing papers, to be launched at the conference.

### **3. Does free global trade pose too many risks?**

We face a future of uncertainty, and possible new threats to our food supplies, natural heritage, and even human health, from animal and plant pathogens, according to Relu researchers writing in a newly-published special interdisciplinary issue of [Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B](#). They conclude that climate change, the evolution of new pathogens and the tendency for existing ones to develop the ability to infect new hosts, may put us at greater risk from pathogens in the future. But these problems are exacerbated by human behaviour, and understanding this could be key to helping policymakers deal with risk and uncertainty.

### **4. Scottish Government supports Dundee University involvement in Borderlands research**

The Scottish Government has awarded Chris Spray of Dundee University's UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science £25,000 to enable the team to join Relu's [Flood Management in Borderlands](#) project, being led by Liz Oughton. Dundee, Tweed Forum and SEPA are already involved in a pilot catchment study of the Tweed Tributary of Eddleston Water, looking at river restoration and natural flood management. The new grant will enable them to match work that the Tweed Forum, Newcastle, Durham and York Universities are carrying out on one of the Tweed's English tributaries, the Wooler Water.

### **5. Could the European Water Framework Directive benefit towns rather than countryside?**

Implementation of the European Water Framework Directive, designed to change agricultural land use – thereby reducing run-off of pollutants into water courses – could achieve significant improvements in water quality, but at the expense of farm incomes. This could have serious economic consequences for the countryside, while it would be the users of urban waterways for leisure who would benefit most according to researchers working on Relu's *Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive* project. Relu's Policy and Practice [Note no 28](#) explains how the research can help decision-makers to target scarce resources to those areas which will respond most positively to additional spending.

## **6. Prized research on lake catchment participation**

Relu's [Testing a Community Approach to Catchment Management](#) project has been awarded an "Above and Beyond" Staff Prize by Lancaster University for their initiative in sharing research with stakeholders and the public. They will be donating the prize of £1000 to the Loweswater Care Project, a group of stakeholders, working to address pollution in Loweswater, that has grown out of their research initiative.

## **7. Relu evidence cited by EFRA Committee**

In its report [The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013](#), which was published in April, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has specifically cited evidence from Relu's briefing paper [Informing the Reform and Implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy](#).

## **8. Zoonotic disease – whose problem is it anyway?**

Local government has a wide variety of responsibilities relating to livestock and zoonotic diseases, but these are often addressed by a range of different departments and functions within local authorities. With climate change new threats may emerge. Relu's latest policy and practice note for local authorities: "[The role of local government in managing disease risk in rural areas](#)" aims to bring some focus to the way in which local authorities address these responsibilities and draws on the latest research from the programme to inform their strategies.

## **9. Research provides evidence for select committees**

Evidence submitted by Relu to Government select committees is now available on the Relu website. Latest additions include [Evidence for the Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry on Sustainable Food](#); (to which Relu Director Philip Lowe was also called to give [oral evidence](#)) a report on [Sustainable Agricultural Intensification – Encapsulating and Motivating Policy Adjustment](#) by Relu researcher Noel Russell, from the University of Manchester, and a [Submission to the EFRA Committee inquiry into Farming Regulation](#) compiled for Relu by Land Use Consultant Alan Woods.

## **10. Lost in Translation: Living with uncertainty in animal disease management**

Relu's [Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control](#) project holds its [end of project conference](#) on Wednesday 21st September 2011. The conference will showcase project research findings and recommendations and include contributions from external speakers including Martyn Jeggo (Australian Animal Health Laboratory), Katinka de Balogh (Food and Agriculture of the United Nations) and Andrew Stirling (University of Sussex). [Bookings](#) may be made via the website.

## **11. Could businesses fund peatland restoration?**

There is growing interest in gaining private investment in peatland restoration through carbon markets. The [Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change](#) project has been developing the evidence base to show how restoration affects carbon storage in peat soils, and considering how we can ensure such work doesn't compromise the other benefits uplands provide. Their latest [policy brief](#) considers ways to overcome regulatory hurdles and argues that it may be possible to make this a reality via corporate social responsibility.

## **12. Research meets planning**

Relu research is making a major contribution to the [UK Ireland Planning Research Conference](#) to be held in Birmingham in September, including a dedicated Relu session, coordinated by Alister Scott, looking at planning implications from the research. This will feature Claudia Carter and Nikki Schiessel ([Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe](#)); Alan Bond and colleagues ([Impacts of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops](#)); Mark Reed ([Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage future change](#)); Martin Phillips ([Rural Communities Adapting and Living with Climate Change](#)); Steve Cinderby ([Flood Management in Borderlands](#)); and Sally Hewitt from Lincolnshire Council, reflecting on her experiences as a [Relu visiting fellow](#).

### 13. Relu featured in Landscapes of the Future

The [Landscapes of the Future POSTnote](#) published by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology draws on Relu evidence for the benefits of an integrated approach to land use and cites Relu's briefing paper [Shaping the Nature of England: policy pointers from the Relu Programme](#).

### 14. Uplands Policy Review and the role of national parks

A joint Relu/Northern Rural Network event on 14 September at Newcastle University will explore the implications of the 2011 Defra Uplands Policy Statement and subsequent developments. Speakers will look at the implications for National Parks, using the Northumberland National Park as a case study. For details and bookings contact [nicola.parker@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.parker@ncl.ac.uk).

### 15. Research feeds into policy on National Ecosystem Assessment

Many Relu researchers made significant contributions to the recently published [National Ecosystems Assessment](#). During March and April Ian Bateman, who led Relu's [Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive](#) project, made presentations on the NEA to ministers and senior civil servants at a series of events leading up to its publication. Audiences included Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for the Environment, and other government ministers, Sir John Beddington, Government Chief Scientist, government scientific advisers and senior officials. Publication of the report stimulated a considerable amount of media coverage.

### 16. Uplands bring arts and science together

Relu's [Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change](#) project has joined with other research projects to work with four artists on a [residency funded by Creative Scotland](#), exploring links between science and art around "conservation conflicts". The results will be presented at the Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability's [Conservation Conflicts Conference](#) in August 2011. The project has also collaborated with singer song-writers, Ilse & Stephen Ogston, on a song about their research findings. They are working with 20:20 Vision and IUCN to develop a music video for the song, which will be premiered along with a live performance at Relu's conference "Who Should Run the Countryside?" in November.

### 17. New edition of guide to best practice on data sharing available now

The UK Data Archive has just published the 3rd edition of its guide '[Managing and Sharing Data - best practice for researchers](#)' and it may be downloaded from the website. The guide draws on the Relu programme's experience in management of interdisciplinary data sets.

### 18. Relu people:

- **Wyn Grant**, who led Relu's [The Role of Regulation in Developing Alternatives to Pesticides](#) project was invited to attend the annual review meeting on the biopesticides programme, held by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate and the International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association, and to contribute to the discussion as an independent expert.
- Relu Director **Philip Lowe** has been appointed as an Independent Member of the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme Board for Rural and Environment Research.
- **Alison Hodge**, PhD student linked to Relu's [Realising the Links between Quality Food Production and Biodiversity Protection](#) has been awarded a PhD for her thesis: "Farm Animal Welfare and Sustainability".
- **Martin Dallimer** from Relu's [Sustainability of Hill Farming](#) project will be moving to Copenhagen in the autumn to take up a Marie Curie Fellowship on the trans-national European ecosystem values of grasslands.