

Relu news



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1 Last chance to register for New Horizons in Animal and Plant Disease:

There are just a few places left for Relu's Animal and Plant Disease Workshop in Central London on 10 May. The event will involve Relu's wave of disease projects and their implications for advancing policy and future research in this field. For any further information or to book a place contact relu@ncl.ac.uk by 15 April.

2 Anaerobic digesters could increase farm profits

According to Relu's project *Energy Production on Farms Through Anaerobic Digestion*, small-scale energy production on farms could be good for farmers and for the environment. Not only is it economically viable on both arable and dairy farms, but it could reduce the amount of artificial fertiliser applied to the land. Read about it in Relu's Policy and Practice Note no 26.

3 Researchers develop China connection

Relu's [Catchment Management for the Protection of Water Resources](#) project team has been engaged in a scoping study for 'Mitigation of Non-Point Source Pollution in China'. Working with partners from the Agro-Environmental Protection Institution, Ministry of Agriculture, Beijing and other leading Chinese Universities, the team is exploring how the principles and approaches investigated in their Relu research may apply in China. The scoping study, funded by Defra's International Sustainable Development Fund and the Ministry of Agriculture in China, is a part of the China-UK Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network (SAIN). This was launched by the UK Secretary of State for the Environment and Chinese Minister of Agriculture in Beijing in 2008 and is a key delivery vehicle for UK-China cooperation on agriculture, food security and environmental sustainability. Relu Director Philip Lowe is a board member of China-UK SAIN. [中英可持续农业创新协作网 China-UK Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network\(SAIN\)](#).

4 Interdisciplinarity on YouTube

The Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) seminar series is now available on YouTube. You can hear Relu Director [Philip Lowe](#) and [Alister Scott](#) from [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural-Urban Fringe](#) with thoughts about interdisciplinary working and spatial planning.

5 Guide to interdisciplinary studies

Interdisciplinary Research Journeys by Catherine Lyall, Ann Bruce and Joyce Tait (of the ESRC Innogen Centre in Edinburgh) and Laura Meagher (of the Technology Development Group) will be published shortly by Bloomsbury Academic Press. The book, which draws on Relu experience, is a practical guide for researchers and research managers – in academia but also in industry and public sector research – who want to create interdisciplinary research strategies, programmes or projects at a personal, institutional, multi-institutional or international level. Relu Director Philip Lowe welcomed the publication and said: "This book is an essential guide for researchers and research managers in how to do interdisciplinary projects and programmes. Written by a team highly experienced in the conduct and evaluation of interdisciplinary work, the book is full of helpful tips and practical examples."

6 Catchment management approach catches on

On World Water Day (22 March) Laurence Smith and Kevin Hiscock from the [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) project team presented key findings at the Water Stakeholder Forum organised by Defra in London. They highlighted the components of a template for catchment management, and supporting tools for catchment assessment, planning and knowledge exchange developed by the team including the [Ecosystem Health Report Card](#) and Extended Export Coefficient modelling approach. At the Forum, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, announced the adoption of the 'catchment management approach' and explained its role in meeting the goals of the Water Framework Directive while integrating management of flood risk and water abstraction. He launched ten catchment management pilot schemes to be led by the Environment

Agency. The Forum was chaired by Defra's Head of Water Quality and was also addressed by the Chair of the Environment Agency and the Chair of Natural England.

7 Collaborative conservation

Relu's [Collaborative conservation in Agri-Environment Schemes](#) project is holding a workshop on Thursday 14th July at Newcastle University to discuss preliminary findings and to kick off a dissemination programme. Spaces are limited; please contact Jeremy Franks for information J.R.Franks@ncl.ac.uk.

8 Cash for carbon in inquiry evidence

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's Farming in the Uplands inquiry cited evidence on the role of peat soils in sequestering carbon and their potential for carbon markets from Relu's [Sustainable Uplands: learning to manage future change](#) project in their report [Farming in the Uplands](#).

9 Masterclass in interdisciplinarity

Relu Director Philip Lowe gave the opening address at a [two-day Masterclass](#) for managers and managers-to-be of interdisciplinary research programmes. The event was organised by Catherine Lyall, Laura Meagher and Ann Bruce, of the University of Edinburgh. The focus of the event was on the challenges of interdisciplinary leadership at the project, programme and institutional levels. It was attended by about 40 research leaders, including a number of Relu project researchers who are taking their experience into other programmes.

10. Prevention is better than cure for zoonotic disease

The risk of contracting zoonotic diseases that pass from animals to humans appears to be on the increase in the UK, but encouraging countryside users to take simple precautions to protect themselves is the best response, according to Relu's project [Assessing and Communicating Disease Risks for Countryside Users](#). The researchers found that a systematic approach to all the UK's common zoonotic disease risks needs to involve a wide range of people, including the individual land managers and organisations that have responsibility for areas used by the public. At the moment it isn't clear who should take the lead – health professionals or land managers – and although both play an important role, neither group has the whole range of health and environmental expertise needed. But in Relu's Policy and Practice Note No 27, the researchers say that if there were a mechanism to enable them to share knowledge and then draw on that single source, it would be a useful step forward.

11. Knowledge exchange workshop brings together diverse disciplines

The Relu/LWEC Sustainable Uplands [Transforming Knowledge for Upland Change](#) project has hosted a workshop for the leading thinkers in knowledge exchange research, bringing together disciplines as diverse as linguistics, education, ecology and psychology to think about what works and doesn't work. The group will be publishing a series of papers, including one on the top research questions for knowledge exchange, and an integrated theoretical model of processes. In the next phase they will test and refine their theory by interviewing knowledge exchange practitioners, researchers and stakeholders across UK uplands. The researchers are working with Relu, LWEC and ESRC to translate their findings into recommendations for funding bodies and researchers. Findings are being integrated into the RCUK's Impact Toolkit.

12. Relu drives ESRC data management

ESRC's research data policy 2010, which comes into practice this month, has drawn heavily on Relu experience by introducing the need for data management planning for all grant applications. Relu Data Support Service Manager Veerle Van den Eynden, worked closely with ESRC staff to ensure that valuable experiences of data management planning and data archiving from interdisciplinary projects was incorporated. Research applications will now have to include data management plans when they are submitted to ESRC, and researchers will be expected to make data as openly available as possible for subsequent use.

13. A land use strategy for Scotland

Scottish Ministers have laid [Scotland's first land use strategy](#) and an accompanying consultation report before the Scottish Parliament. The Strategy

signals a change in the ways that land use is approached across the country, and will influence a wide range of land use decisions. Relu's researchers have been involved throughout, contributing evidence to the report, peer reviewing and as members of the expert panel. Relu also commissioned a major report on land use "[The Lie of the Land: future challenges for rural land use policy in Scotland and possible responses](#)" which was submitted to the inquiry; and researchers from the [Sustainable Uplands](#) project spent time with the team who were writing the report.

14. European book on regulation of pesticides published

The European Commission REBECA Policy Support Action group's book "[Regulation of Biocontrol Agents](#)" has been published by Springer, edited by Ralf-Udo Ehlers. Relu researcher Wyn Grant contributed the chapter on 'Policy Aspects of Regulation'.

15. Knowledge of animal disease conference: What's lost in translation?

Relu's project [Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control](#) will be holding an end-of-project international conference "Lost in Translation a cross-disciplinary analysis of knowledge exchange and effectiveness in animal disease management" on 21 September at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. The team plans to showcase research findings and recommendations alongside contributions from external speakers including Martyn Jeggo (CSIRO Australia Animal Health Laboratory), and Andrew Stirling (Sussex). To register your interest please contact Ruth Alcock, email r.alcock@lancaster.ac.uk.

16. Tweet on peat

Researchers from the [Sustainable Uplands: transforming knowledge for upland change](#) project have been experimenting with Twitter as a means of gathering stakeholders' views. They invited people to tweet on the use of peat in horticulture as part of the Defra consultation. Twenty two comments were collated and submitted as part of the researchers' response to the consultation.

17. Relu researchers lead major NERC initiative

Relu researchers Dave Raffaelli and Piran White, who are based in the Environment Department at the University of York, are now leading a major NERC thematic programme on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Sustainability ([BESS](#)). Over the next 5 years, £13 million will be spent on research to develop sustainable solutions for maintaining ecosystem services in the face of increasing and diverse pressures. Specifically, the programme aims to help us to understand the role of biodiversity in underpinning ecosystem services and benefits across a range of UK landscapes; to identify the relationship between different levels of biodiversity and ecosystem services; to provide tools that help us explore the implications of possible changes in land use and climate on biodiversity and ecosystem services; and to underpin the development of appropriate landscape management strategies that will ensure the sustainable provision of these services and benefits.

18. Exploring veterinary field expertise at the Royal Veterinary College

Members of Relu's [Science in the Field](#) project team presented preliminary findings to staff at the Royal Veterinary College in March. *Science in the Field* is exploring the current and potential role of field-level advisors (including vets) as knowledge brokers between scientific research and land management practices. The project focuses on how knowledge and expertise are constructed and disseminated. The team met with Deputy Principal Professor Stephen May and members of teaching and research staff at the RVC to test emerging themes and ideas around the nature of veterinarians' field expertise. The meeting generated lively discussion, with staff providing constructive feedback and comments on the research.

19. Research provides lessons for catchment management

A joint Relu/[Northern Rural Network one-day event](#) on catchment management and public engagement took place in Newcastle in February. Three Relu projects presented research findings: [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#); [Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies](#) and [Flood Management in Borderlands](#). The aim was to look at how interdisciplinary research and public engagement can make catchment management more effective and how partnerships can help. Local case studies provided some

practical examples.

20. Farmers club hears about potential rewards for environmental services

Joe Morris from Relu's [Integrated Management of Floodplains](#) project gave a talk to the Commercial Farmers Group in the Farmers Club, London, drawing on research from the Relu and Foresight programmes, and exploring the factors shaping agriculture. He discussed how the review of the Common Agricultural Policy is likely to drive future change and how growth in global markets for food and bio-energy commodities is likely to increase the incentives for UK farm output. He suggested that while farmers will be required to do more to conserve natural resources and protect the environment, there is scope to reward them for providing specific environmental services, such as carbon storage, flood control and enhanced biodiversity. New knowledge, skills and innovations, whether induced by markets or regulation, will be needed to meet these future challenges. The audience was particularly interested to learn how, in the context of increased demand for food, research can support high performance, sustainable farming. They were also concerned to know how, in practice, farmers are to be more comprehensively rewarded for providing environmental services, especially where this involves additional costs or lost opportunities on their part. They were, however, sceptical about whether there is a real willingness to pay.

21. New framework for environment in Wales

[Relu's response to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation](#) 'A Living Wales – a new framework for our environment, our countryside and our seas' can now be found on the Relu website.

22. Relu people:

- **Alister Scott** who is leading Relu's [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural-Urban Fringe](#) project has been appointed to the Chair of Spatial Planning and Governance in the School of Property, Construction and Planning at Birmingham City University.
- **Anders Munk**, doctoral student on Relu's [Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies](#) project, has been awarded his PhD and is now an assistant professor in the Department for Engineering Management at the Technical University of Denmark.
- Relu Interdisciplinary Fellow **Evan Fraser** has been awarded a Research Chair in Food Security at the University of Guelph in Canada.
- UKWIR Director **Mike Farrimond**, has left his post but continues to work freelance in the field of water research.
- **Tom Warburton** from the Homes and Communities Agency has been appointed Head of Area for Cumbria and Lancashire.
- A session on 'Stakeholder participation in hydrology' was convened by **Tobias Krueger** of the [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) project team at the European Geosciences Union General Assembly in Vienna.
- Relu SAC member **Maggie Gill** has completed her service as Chief Scientific Advisor for Rural Affairs and Environment for the Scottish Government but continues her work with the Department for International Development, supporting the sustainable agriculture team, and her membership of the Independent Science and Partnership Council of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.
- Relu Visiting Fellow **Jeremy Blackburn** is taking up the post of Policy Manager with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors later this month.
- Relu Director **Philip Lowe** and **Ian Hodge** had dinner with the Duke of Edinburgh and the Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace to discuss the rural economy.

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