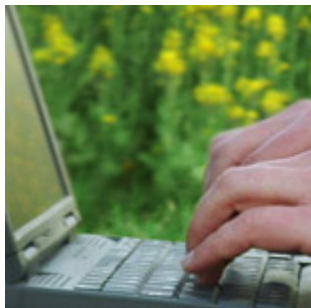


## Relu news



**October 2010**

### **Contents**

1. Building good fences could make for cleaner water
2. Research helps local government to address new responsibilities
3. Commercial fishing developments put skills and biodiversity at risk
4. NERC fellowship awarded to water resources researcher
5. Relu researchers take the lead in catchment projects
6. Pursuing disease control worldwide
7. Engaging local communities
8. Research on carbon labelling feeds into World Bank publication
9. BSA fellowship develops science communications skills
10. Relu plays prominent role in peatlands enquiry
11. Research in The Lancet
12. Sixth International Conference on Environmental Futures
13. Watery end
14. Uplands on film
15. Practitioners digest research results
16. Bovine tuberculosis debate too polarised
17. Early career researchers' workshop on interdisciplinarity
18. Relu people

### **1. Building good fences could make for cleaner water**

Building good fences could make our water cleaner, and help us to meet European standards, according to Relu scientists who have created a computer model to investigate the problem of faecal pollution in UK rivers. The research shows that there is a high risk of faecal pollution entering watercourses within areas with high densities of dairy cattle. The UK has to tackle this problem, not only because of the health risks, but also because of European legislation. Drawing on work from several projects across the Relu research programme, the team investigated different approaches. They found that simple farm-scale solutions are likely to be most effective at reducing the numbers of potentially dangerous organisms entering watercourses – and could work out cheaper both for farmers and consumers. [Press release](#)

### **2. Research helps local government to address new responsibilities**

Local government is being asked to take on new responsibilities for managing natural resources, including water, and the “big society” vision of the new coalition is likely to reinforce this process. European legislation will also make demands and climate change adds to the mix. But there are opportunities too, for authorities to take the lead in building partnerships and finding novel ways of working, to ensure that communities get the safe water supplies they need, and to minimise flood risks. A new [Relu policy and practice note](#) is tailored specifically to a local government audience and draws on research from across the programme to support authorities in addressing these new challenges.

### **3. Commercial fishing developments put skills and biodiversity at risk**

The biodiversity of our rivers and still waters may be at risk from disease and invasion by non native species, and anglers could be losing out too, according to Relu researchers. The team, from the universities of Newcastle, Durham and Hull, found that angling has many positive aspects for conservation: anglers tend to be skilled observers of the natural world, with a keen interest in preserving natural habitats. But a growth in commercial facilities, including artificial still waters, could have a downside, and could put the development of anglers’ unique skills and knowledge at risk. Although these newer, artificial fishing facilities can provide good access for families, older and disabled people, there is a danger that the younger generations of anglers who use them may develop a poorer understanding of what constitutes a healthy aquatic ecosystem. And some of these commercial enterprises may be falling down on basic biosecurity. [Policy and Practice Note](#)

### **4. NERC Fellowship awarded to water resources researcher**

Tobias Krueger has been awarded a NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship. This will fund a 2-year post for him at University of East Anglia to build on the research he has been pioneering under [Relu’s Catchment management for the protection of water resources project](#). Tobi will be working with the Broads Authority and Westcountry Rivers Trust to extend the application of the project’s interactive catchment management decision-support tool. There will be a programme of outreach activities including a placement at Defra, where he will be showing policy makers how this kind of tool can be used to support agri-environmental schemes.

### **5. Relu researchers take the lead in catchment management projects**

Relu researchers Kevin Hiscock, Andrew Lovett and Phil Haygarth are playing a leading role in the Demonstration Test Catchments Project, investigating whether measures taken on farms across a whole river catchment can reduce the impact of agricultural water pollution on ecology, while maintaining food production. This is a joint Defra, Environment Agency and Welsh Assembly Government initiative working in three river catchments – the [Wensum in Norfolk](#) plus the [Eden](#) (Cumbria) and Avon (Hampshire). The projects all draw on the expertise of land owners, managers, farming and environmental organisations as well as government agencies and researchers. They aim to produce evidence that can be used to improve the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes

### **6. Pursuing disease control worldwide**

Sophia Latham from the [Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control](#) team has visited the FAO/World Organisation for Animal Health European headquarters in Rome and spoken to representatives from their Foot and Mouth Disease annual meeting about the project. She also addressed the Crisis Management Centre Animal Health team, the operational arm of the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal

Disease, who are responsible for rapid response to Avian Influenza outbreaks worldwide, providing technical and operational help to affected governments in combating epidemics

### **7. Engaging local communities**

At a workshop on community engagement at the Local Government Group's Annual Rural Commission, Land Use Consultant Alan Woods and Sally Hewitt, Principal Rural Policy Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, outlined the Relu Programme and what it can contribute to this area of work for local government. Discussion and suggestions from the workshop will be built into a new Local Government Policy and Practice Note in the Relu series.

### **8. Research on carbon labelling feeds into World Bank publication**

The World Bank has published "[Can carbon labeling be development friendly: recommendations on how to improve emerging schemes](#)". The report is based on the Relu project *Comparative Merits of Consuming Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas*.

### **9. BSA fellowship develops science communications skills**

Colette Jones, from Relu's *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* project found that sitting alongside science correspondents and writing 800-word news reports for a daily paper is the best way to learn how to communicate research to the public. She spent three weeks this summer working with the environment correspondent at The Scotsman newspaper and published articles on new species of marine worms, the decline of Scottish junipers and beached seal pups. [Press release](#)

'The experience was very valuable in training me to write concisely', said Colette, who also worked as a science journalist at the British Science Festival in Aston. The fellowship was one of ten awarded every year to scientists by the British Science Association to promote good science communication. [More information](#)

### **10. Relu plays prominent role in peatlands inquiry**

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Commission of Inquiry into UK peatlands has published draft Scientific Review of eight priority topics which were discussed at the 'Investing in Peatlands - the Climate Challenge' conference at Durham University on 28-29th September. Members of Relu's *Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change* team have been prominent in this work, with Fred Worrall leading on "Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Potential" and "Impacts of Burning Management on Peatlands" and Mark Reed on "Policy Options for Sustainable Management", with support from the Relu programme.

### **11. Research in The Lancet**

Ken Forbes and Norval Strachan from Relu's *Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities* project have had a comment on campylobacter published in [The Lancet](#). It builds on work that Norval carried out while working at the Food Safety Authority in New Zealand.

### **12. Sixth International Conference on Environmental Futures**

The [6th ICEF](#) will take place in Newcastle upon Tyne in July 2011, and will include a Relu workshop as part of the programme. The conference aims to explore the current and potential future extent and nature of interdisciplinary research and management practice across the environmental domain. It is a major international forum for senior scientists, environmental managers and policy formers to debate 'interdisciplinary' progress in environmental science and management.

### **13. Watery end**

Relu's [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) project will hold its end of project conference at SOAS in London on 29 November 2010. The conference will present findings from the project and provide opportunities for discussion about the issues raised. Other Relu projects that address the challenges of catchment management and the protection of water resources will also be featured. Lessons from the research will appear in a book "Catchment and River Basin Management: Integrating Science and Governance for Protection of our Water Resources", to be published by Earthscan in 2011. For more information and bookings email [sarah.m.clarke@uea.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.m.clarke@uea.ac.uk) or telephone 01603 593176.

#### **14. Uplands on film**

The [Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change](#) project has two new films available on its website, looking at possible scenarios for future land use in the hills.

#### **15. Practitioners digest research results**

Practitioners from the farming and energy industries took a keen interest in the results being reported from Relu's [Energy Production on Farms Through Anaerobic Digestion](#) project at an event in Reading. According to the team farm-scale energy production could be profitable for farmers, but they would do better if they feed the digester with waste and crops that grow well in the UK, rather than trying to grow maize. The reports provoked a lively and useful debate amongst delegates.

#### **16. Bovine tuberculosis debate too polarised**

Bovine tuberculosis in cattle herds seems to have become an insoluble problem for farmers and for policymakers. Debate focuses almost exclusively on the role of the badger and researchers working on Relu research projects argue that this is unhelpful, clouding the real issue of cattle health. [Relu's policy and practice note no 19](#) unpicks the threads of the debate and examines options for the future.

#### **17. Early career researchers' workshop on interdisciplinarity**

On 11-12 November 2010 Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability at the University of Aberdeen is holding a workshop for early career researchers and PhD students interested in working in interdisciplinary research. [Information and bookings](#)

#### **18. Relu People:**

- Relu Food Forum member **David Gregory** has joined the BBSRC Council and the Assured Food Standards Board.
- **Tamsin Cooper** has taken up a post as Deputy Director at Green Alliance.
- **Jules Pretty** has been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability and Resources) at the University of Essex.
- **David Macdonald**, from Oxford University's Department of Zoology, has been awarded a CBE for his services to natural sciences.
- Relu interdisciplinary fellow **Abigail Woods** has been appointed a visiting fellow to the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University.
- Relu researcher **Gareth Edwards-Jones** has been appointed to the Waitrose Chair in Sustainable Agriculture at Aberystwyth.
- **Paul Boyle** has been appointed Chief Executive and Deputy Chair of the Economic and Social Research Council.
- Relu Director **Philip Lowe** has been appointed to the Board of the Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability.
- Relu researcher **Peter Mills** has taken up the post of Vice-Principal at Harper Adams University College.
- **Les Firbank** is now a visiting professor at Leeds University.

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