

## Relu news



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### **1. A few places left for Relu conference**

There are just a few places left for Relu's conference: "Who should run the countryside?" The exciting programme of debates and interactive activities will take place at the Sage Gateshead on Wednesday 16 November. Book online at [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk).

### **2. Relu to continue into 2013**

The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme has been granted an extension to March 2013. The extra year will mainly be devoted to further communications work, promoting findings from the research to a wide audience of policymakers and practitioners across the UK and feeding Relu's experience into new research programmes. Relu's series of policy and practice notes and briefing papers have been widely welcomed by researchers and stakeholders and the Director's Office will be building on these as well as developing new communications channels.

### **3. Royal Society special issue - reduced price for Relu stakeholders**

Royal Society Publishing has just published "Interdisciplinary perspectives on the management of infectious animal and plant diseases", compiled and edited by Philip Lowe, Jeremy Phillipson, Laura E Green, Stephen Hunter, Michael J Jeger, Guy M Poppy and Jeff Waage. See – [http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/site/2011/Infectious\\_disease\\_management.xhtml](http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/site/2011/Infectious_disease_management.xhtml) for further details or you can go straight to the issue contents at <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/366/1573.toc> The print issue is available at the special price of £47.50. You can order this online via the above web page (enter special code TB1573 when prompted) or, alternatively, you can contact [debbie.vaughan@royalsociety.org](mailto:debbie.vaughan@royalsociety.org)

### **4. Research contributes to Government Growth Review**

Relu and the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University have collaborated to compile a substantial [response to the Government's Growth Review on Rural Economies](#), drawing on evidence from across the Relu programme indicating the important role of rural areas as incubators and catalysts for sustainable growth.

### **5. What makes an expert field advisor?**

Field advisors build up their expertise in complex ways, and fulfil an important role linking research and practice according to Relu research project [Science in the Field](#). They don't simply transfer knowledge from other experts, but combine and repackage information, drawing on their own accumulated field experience and tailoring it to the needs of individual farmers. See [Relu Policy and Practice Note no 30](#) for more details.

### **6. Reshaping the management of animal and plant disease**

Shouldn't policymakers be looking at the fundamentals in animal and plant disease, learning lessons and exchanging information across both of these fields and involving stakeholders at every stage? That has always been the Relu approach and you can read about some of the outcomes in "[Growing Concerns: animal and plant disease policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century](#)" which takes a fresh look at the problem in the light of research from across the programme.

### **7. Relu contributes to planning future**

The [UK Ireland Planning Research Conference](#) in September featured a host of Relu researchers and stakeholders, and included a special interactive Relu session chaired by Alister Scott from [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural-Urban Fringe](#). The session highlighted the contribution and potential that Relu research can make towards spatial planning. Papers will be available on the [project website](#).

### **8. Researchers respond to House of Lords call for evidence**

Laurence Smith and colleagues from Relu's [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) have submitted [a report to the House of Lords Inquiry into Freshwater Policy](#) which may be read on the Relu website.

Could National Parks and other protected areas be environmental test beds for landscape-scale cooperation amongst farmers? This was one of the questions up for debate at a joint Relu/ Northern Rural Network event in September, where Relu's [latest local government policy and practice note](#) on the role of protected areas was launched.

#### **10. Relu experience feeds into future research programmes**

In July Relu Assistant Director Jeremy Phillipson gave an invited address on Knowledge Exchange to 20 NERC/LWEC research programmes at an LWEC [Knowledge Exchange Good Practice Event](#) at the Royal Institution, London, drawing on the Relu experience and sharing the programme's innovative approach.

#### **11. Living with uncertainty in animal disease management**

Relu's [Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control](#) Project team held a successful conference 'Lost in Translation: Living with uncertainty in animal disease management' in September at the Royal College of Surgeons, London. The conference showcased research findings and recommendations to a wide international audience across policy and practice. In addition, keynote contributions from Martyn Jeggo (Australian Animal Health Laboratory), Katinka de Balogh (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) and Andrew Stirling (University of Sussex) gave valuable multidimensional and international input across the programme for the day. Presentations given at the conference can be found on the [website](#). Individual video recordings of each presentation will be available shortly.

#### **12. Collaborative agri environment schemes up for discussion**

A [stakeholder workshop](#) to discuss the findings of Relu's [Collaborative Conservation in Agri Environment Schemes](#) project was attended by representatives from Defra, Natural England, ESRC and other public and private bodies and conservation organisations. Discussion included the possibility of designing collective conservation options and/or introducing another level to the Environmental Stewardship Scheme which would attract not just current ESS participants but also farmers not in ESS.

#### **13. Relu series published in Vet Record**

Veterinary Record, the journal of the British Veterinary Association, is currently publishing a groundbreaking series of articles by researchers from across the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme. The series explores the role of the profession in UK society and examines some of the issues arising from the Professor Philip Lowe's report "Unlocking Potential: a report on veterinary expertise in food animal production". The series was launched on 17 September 2011 with an introductory article by Anne Liddon, Sue Bradley and Philip Lowe <http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/169/12/302.full> and continues weekly until 27 October.

#### **14. How can we address the risks posed by new plant pathogens?**

Plants play a vital role in food security, wildlife habitats and landscapes. Disease can threaten all of these and new pathogens are being identified all the time. The [latest Relu research](#) shows how interdisciplinary research can help us to produce integrated, holistic models of risk assessment and disease management that will address these threats much more effectively.

#### **15. Livestock sellers should provide more information about disease risk, say researchers**

Relu researchers from the [Governance of Livestock Disease project](#) say that anyone purchasing livestock should be fully informed about the health status of the herd from which they are purchasing and about any known risks. If provision of this data were mandatory, they say, any such risks would drive down prices. Thus, farmers would have a much greater incentive to eliminate disease in their herds. Read more about it in Relu's latest [policy and practice note no 34](#).

#### **16. Award for PhD student**

Relu PhD student Laura MacRitchie has won a young investigators award at the 16<sup>th</sup> International *Campylobacter*, *Helicobacter* and related organisms conference in Vancouver, Canada. Laura, presented two posters and gave an oral presentation of her work on a population exposure to *Campylobacter* risk factors. She is in the third year of her PhD at the University of Aberdeen and her studentship is linked with the [Reducing E. coli O157 risks in rural communities](#) project.

As Relu enters its final phase, the programme's website is being permanently archived by the British Library as part of its web archiving programme. The Library selects and archive sites to represent aspects of UK documentary heritage so that they will remain available to researchers in the future, even as hardware and software changes over time. Their archive can be seen at <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/>

### 18. Working together to improve the local environment

The Big Society makes much of involving local people in addressing environmental problems in their area. But can this really work in practice, when the problems are as complex as the algal blooms that were disfiguring the picturesque lake of Loweswater? Researchers from Relu's [Testing a Community Approach to Catchment Management](#) project worked alongside non-scientists to show that this kind of approach can bring people together, with a sense of common purpose, to make a real difference. The group that developed - "The Loweswater Care Project" - was able to bring a varied range of skills and expertise to the problem, which result not only in some environmental improvements, but also useful lessons for policymakers, outlined in [Policy and Practice Note 32](#).

### 19. Sustainable uplands take research into Defra

Mark Reed, from Relu's [Sustainable Uplands: learning to manage future change](#) project and now leading [Transforming Knowledge for Upland Change](#) is currently work shadowing within Defra and taking research findings on carbon offsetting and peatland restoration directly to policy makers. The project has published three new policy briefs which may be accessed on the project website:

[How to become an effective knowledge manager:](#)

[Paying to restore peatland with carbon:](#)

[How to design more effective participatory decision-making processes:](#)

### 20. Relu stakeholder experience feeds into new think tank

Wyn Grant who led Relu's [The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides](#) and was a co investigator on [The Governance of Livestock Disease](#) was asked to address the inaugural meeting of a new think tank, the Institute for Animals and Social Justice, in London on 30 June and to talk about the experience of stakeholder engagement in the Programme.

### 21. Relu research a beacon

Relu's [Understanding Environmental Knowledge Controversies](#) project has been featured on the universities public engagement beacon website [www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk) as a [case study](#).

### 22. Relu people:

- It is with great sadness that we note the death, in August, of **Gareth Edwards-Jones**, Principal Investigator on the Relu project [Comparative Merits of Consuming Vegetables Produced Locally and Overseas](#). Gareth had a significant international and national influence on shaping the policy debate, combining his work as Professor of Agriculture and Land-Use Studies at Bangor University with the Waitrose Chair of Sustainable Agriculture in a joint arrangement with Aberystwyth University and making a very important contribution to the Relu Programme. [Obituary](#).
- Relu Assistant Director **Jeremy Phillipson** and researcher **Michael Winter** have been appointed to Defra's high level advisory panel in relation to its Rural Economy Growth Review.
- **Clive Potter** who led Relu's [Lessons from Dutch Elm Disease in Assessing the Threat from Sudden Oak Death](#) has been asked to join a Tree Health Expert Group set up by Defra to look into, and make the case for, more research and policy action on this issue.

- **Wyn Grant** who led *Relu's The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides* and was co investigator on *The Governance of Livestock Disease* will be giving the Amos Memorial Lecture 2011 on 3 November at East Malling Conference Centre. Email [greeves@emr.ac.uk](mailto:greeves@emr.ac.uk) for details.
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed **Ian Bateman** who led [Modelling the Impacts of the Water Framework Directive](#) and **Louise Heathwaite** who co-led [Assessment of Knowledge Sources in Animal Disease Control](#) to its science advisory council.
- **Claudia Carter and Alister Scott** from Relu's [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe](#) project have an invited paper for the [Government Gazette](#) Spatial planning - New opportunities for environmental governance - published this month.
- **Tom MacMillan**, who has been Executive Director of the Food Ethics Council since 2003, and a member of Relu's Food Chain Forum, is taking up a new post as Director of Innovation at the Soil Association.

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