

Relu news



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1. Relu impact applauded in Research Council report

An impact evaluation of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme, commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council has found that "Relu was successful in generating a portfolio of a significant number and diversified range of types of impacts and impacts-in-progress in a variety of contexts." The report, carried out by Dr Laura Meagher and the Technology Development Group, says that "there was sound evidence for instrumental impacts" and "Relu has built a solid base for future knowledge exchange, within and beyond the specific researcher/stakeholder relationships forged." Both parts of the report, including case studies from the programme, are available on the [ESRC website](#).

2. Can Payment for Ecosystem Services bring environmental benefits?

The services provided from nature are essential to life on Earth, but do we value them sufficiently? Would Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) - ie putting a market value on them - be beneficial? A [new policy and practice note](#) in the Relu series concludes that PES will not provide all the answers we need but could prove to be a useful tool for better conservation of natural resources. It draws on evidence from across the Living With Environmental Change Programme (LWEC), examines the current situation and makes recommendations for future directions.

3. Thinking big would help balance demands of food and wildlife

Researchers have found that a larger-scale approach to sustainable farming could be more beneficial for wildlife than our current system of farm-based agri environment payments. As the global population grows, demands on land become ever greater and environmental change is likely to add to the pressure. Tim Benton and researchers who were part of the team working on Relu's [Effects of scale in organic agriculture project](#) have been investigating the most effective approaches to optimising sustainable food production while protecting wildlife. In a recent [Relu policy and practice note](#) they conclude that conservation of populations of animals and plants requires thinking and planning across the landscape, because it is at this scale, not within the individual farm, that ecological processes happen. A key advance in thinking is not how to make each farm more "wildlife friendly" in itself, but how to make the landscape work better as a whole.

4. LWEC Assembly live and online

The first Living With Environmental Change Assembly, "Supporting the Journey to Adaptation", takes place on 12-13 November 2012 at Aston University Business School in Birmingham. Places are limited so for information and booking please contact office@lwec.org.uk with your name and details and include "Event 2012" in the message header. LWEC is also able to livestream some of the sessions which means that people can watch them online, thanks to the support of the Environmental Sustainability Knowledge Transfer Network. So if you can't attend in person it may be possible to link into the event electronically. Please get in touch for details.

5. Connecting Nature Improvement Areas with research

Relu and other programmes within Living With Environmental Change have been working with the new Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) to provide relevant information from the research programmes that can help NIAs to fulfil their remit to create meaningful partnerships that benefit wildlife and people. A [new policy and practice note](#) in the Relu series gives some pointers for the partnerships and will help them to make useful contacts with researchers.

6. Why bother to aim for impact?

Relu Assistant Director Jeremy Phillipson told young researchers just why they needed to plan for impact in their careers and research at a joint session he ran with Gill Clark from the Scottish Government for ESRC's Post graduate conference "[Planning for Impact: Making a difference, why bother?](#)" in Brighton in September. Giving the delegates a taste of interdisciplinarity and involving stakeholders, he shared some of the experiences of Relu in making research really count.

7. Access to environmental information, from village hall to Whitehall

Nowadays we expect access to immediate information, evidence-based decision making and stakeholder involvement to be the norm. NERC's [Environmental Virtual Observatory](#) pilot, a consortium of a dozen UK universities and research institutes, is a proof of concept project to explore and illustrate the use of cloud computing to improve communication between communities, environmental researchers and regulators, and so help improve environmental decision making. For instance, one local exemplar, is working with stakeholders in three river catchments; the Tarland in Scotland, the Dyfi in Wales and the Eden in England, focuses on flooding and water quality issues, common concerns across all three catchments. Another is driven by 100+ hydrological and hydrochemical models, focusing from catchment to national scale and reporting current and forecast N and P fluxes under various scenarios. By using strong visualisation, the project team aims to make information relevant to a wide range of audiences, from village hall to Whitehall. Further Information is available on the website www.evo-uk.org.

8. Landbridge launches with workshop on inter-professional working

Landbridge, a new knowledge exchange network for rural professions, led by Relu's Assistant Director and LWEC Land Use Fellow Jeremy Phillipson, holds its first workshop 'Setting an agenda for rural inter-professional working and exchange' this month. The event provides a platform for advisors from different professions to learn from each other's experiences of inter-professional working, identify good practice and consider the implications for future policy, training and development. The Landbridge network is supported by leading professional bodies and the UK Research Councils. For further details on Landbridge contact amy.proctor@ncl.ac.uk.

9. New inter Research Council project on infectious diseases

A new project: [Sources, Seasonality, Transmission and Control: Campylobacter and human behaviour in a changing environment](#) has just launched under the [Environmental and Social Ecology of Human Infectious Diseases](#) programme, funded by a partnership of the MRC, NERC, ESRC and BBSRC. The new project draws on important links between social and natural sciences and public health and medicine forged during Relu's [Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities](#) project.

10. TABLES turn to tools for ecosystems policy

Alister Scott, who led Relu's [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe](#) project, is coordinating a project to integrate the principles and thinking behind the ecosystem approach into developing and testing tools that can help policymakers in this new but growing area. The [Tools: Applications, Benefits and Linkages for Ecosystems project](#), (TABLES) combines two work packages of the [National Ecosystem Assessment](#) follow-on project and aims to make the evidence base relevant to decision and policymaking at different spatial scales across the UK.

11. ESPA calls for funding proposals

Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation is currently inviting proposals for the following [three calls](#):

- Applications for a grant to **Understand How Research is Put into Use** for Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation.
- Applications from groups with a link to a previous ESPA project to address any significant un-met opportunities which can help to **Put ESPA's Research into Use** to benefit poor people in low income

countries.

- Projects which have previously received funding or are currently receiving funding from ESPA are invited to apply for an **ESPA Open Access Publication Grant 2012**.

The closing date for all three calls is **17th October 2012**. Please refer to the call documentation for exact details.

12. Planning game is the real business

At a knowledge exchange event for Local Enterprise Partnerships 55 delegates played a mass game of [Rufopoly](#), the board game developed by the [Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe](#) project. The players included third sector and public sector representatives from local authorities and government departments. Businesses were also trying out the game for the first time. The special "LEPopoly" session enabled all the players to focus on the same planning issue to create their vision of development for Rufshire. They then swapped ideas at the end of the game in order to share their different perspectives, with some very fruitful discussion.

13. What's bugging bees?

The [EurBee5, a biennial European conference](#) on bees in Halle in September, provided the opportunity for [Insect Pollinator Initiative](#)-funded researchers, including Robert Paxton and his team at Queen's University Belfast/University of Halle, to publicise their recent findings from the [Impact and mitigation of emergent diseases on major UK insect pollinators](#) project. Their work demonstrates that deformed wing virus, probably the most important cause of honey bee colony decline in recent years and transmitted between bees by the exotic Varroa mite, is widespread in the UK, even in localities not currently infested by Varroa mites. However, where Varroa mites are found, levels of the pathogen are much higher. They have also shown that bees infected with viral and microsporidian pathogens may be more susceptible to pathological effects. But exposure to the pesticides used to treat bee colonies against Varroa mites, and common pesticides used on crops such as oilseed rape, do not seem to make bees more susceptible to such infections.

14. Relu people:

- **Wyn Grant**, who worked on Relu's [The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides](#) and [Governance of Livestock Disease](#) projects gave a presentation on Networks Across and Within Disciplines based on his experience of Relu's interdisciplinary research at a workshop at the University of London Institute of Education in July.
- **Ian Bateman** who led Relu's [Modelling the Impact of the Water Framework Directive](#) project has been appointed to the independent Natural Capital Committee.
- **Dave Chadwick** who led Relu's [Safe Recycling of Livestock Waste](#) project is taking up the post of Professor of Sustainable Land Use Systems at Bangor University in the new academic year.
- **David Benson**, who worked on Relu's [Market-Based Mechanisms for Protection of Water Resources](#) project gave a presentation: 'Resolving water conflicts through collaboration: developing a catchment management template to the [European Science Foundation, Junior Summit Water: unite and divide](#) at Stresa, Italy in August.
- **Justin Greaves**, a postdoctoral fellow on Relu's [The Role of Regulation in Developing Biological Alternatives to Pesticides](#) and [Governance of Livestock Disease](#) projects, has been appointed Director of Student

Experience in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick.

- **Laurence Smith** who led Relu's [Catchment Management for Protection of Water Resources](#) and [Market-Based Mechanisms for Protection of Water Resources](#) projects gave a presentation 'From agency control to collaboration? A comparative analysis of 'paradigm shift' in environmental management' at the RGS IBG Annual International Conference, in Edinburgh, in July.
- Relu Assistant Director and LWEC Land Use Fellow **Jeremy Phillipson** has been appointed to the Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Strategic Research Programme Board. He joins two other academic members, **Louise Heathwaite** (Chief Scientific Adviser for Rural Affairs and Environment) and **Tim Benton** (UK Champion for Global Food Security).

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