

Press Release

10 November 2011

**Can individuals’ actions really help to save the planet?**

Can individuals make a difference by “going green”? Or are we dependent on governments to make the right decisions to save the Earth? Experts will be debating the issues at a Rural Economy and Land Use Programme national conference at The Sage Gateshead on 16 November 2011.

Relu researcher Dr Mark Reed from the University of Aberdeen will be arguing that we can all make a difference. He said: “It’s a question of everyone taking responsibility for their own carbon footprint and being conscious of the consequences of our actions, particularly in the developed world. If everyone walked short distances instead of taking the car, for example, that would make a real difference.”

Professor Andrew Watkinson, Director of the Living With Environmental Change Programme said: “We should all be aware of the part we play in a bigger picture, and small actions such as recycling and avoiding waste are not bad ways to behave. But we need much bigger actions from government and business if we are to make a real difference. There needs too, to be a focus on adaptation as well as mitigation.

“There are likely to be threats to the global supply chains, critical infrastructure may be threatened by extreme weather events, we have to develop new industries for energy generation. This calls for a more strategic approach from government.”

Joining Andrew Watkinson will be Richard Wakeford, consultant on rural strategy to the environmental services industry and they will be opposed by Mark Reed, Acting Director, Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability at the University of Aberdeen and Roger Clarke, Chair of Think Global which promotes learning for a just and sustainable world.

Chairing the debate will be Guardian journalist Peter Hetherington.

**Journalists are welcome to attend the debate and the conference.**

Notes for editors:

1 The Relu conference “[Who Should Run the Countryside](http://www.relu.ac.uk/conference/RELU%20Sage%20Programme_WEB.pdf)” takes place at The Sage, Gateshead on Wednesday 16 November.

Big Debate 3 Can protecting your countryside save the Earth?

Venue: Hall 2, The Sage, Gateshead

Time: 15.30-16.30 hrs

Date: Wednesday 16 November 2011

Speaking for, ie: “Yes, protecting your countryside can save the Earth”:

Mark Reed, University of Aberdeen

Roger Clarke, Chair, Think Global

Speaking against ie: “No, protecting your countryside can’t save the Earth”:

Andrew Watkinson, Director, Living With Environmental Change programme

Richard Wakeford**,** consultant on rural strategy to the environmental services industry

1. The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), with additional funding provided by the Scottish Government and Defra. See [www.relu.ac.uk](http://www.relu.ac.uk) for more information about the Relu programme.
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