



Relu Newsletter

Produced in association with [Landbridge](#)

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1 Sowing seeds for more fruitful knowledge exchange

Innovation is a key element in the UK Government's new agri-tech strategy and, according to speakers at a recent event in Peterborough co-hosted by the [Agricultural Industries Confederation](#), the [Association of Independent Crop Consultants](#), the [Home Grown Cereals Authority](#) and [Landbridge](#), agronomists, crop advisers, land agents, ecologists and other advisers have a key role to play. "Building on a solid foundation: improving knowledge exchange in arable farming" aimed to bring together research and practical expertise for more productive future knowledge exchange. Delegates mapped the knowledge exchange landscape in the arable sector, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and developing priorities for how strategies could be improved in the future.

2 A greener CAP?

Many European politicians are describing the new Common Agricultural Policy as "greener" but an international team of conservation biologists and ecologists, including BESS Research Fellow Lynn Dicks and William Sutherland from Cambridge University disagree in a [newly published analysis](#). Examining the reformed Common Agricultural Policy from a biodiversity perspective they found it likely to be less effective than the previous CAP at protecting biodiversity, because the new measures, including compulsory greening measures, are not broadly applicable. Email Lynn Dicks for a copy of the full text (lvd22@cam.ac.uk) or read an [article by Lynn Dicks and Tim Benton based on the paper in The Conversation](#).

3 Finding out what values communities share

Local and national government, businesses, and third sector organisations which are involved in ecosystem services, all need to understand what values people hold, both as individuals and as communities. The provision of drinking water, crop pollination, energy, climate stability, and mental and emotional wellbeing are all important to us in both practical and emotional terms, and how different individuals and communities recognise and relate to them depends on personal, shared, and cultural values. These values are not always explicitly expressed through conventional surveys or reflected in economic valuation but if they are not taken into account difficulties can occur, delaying planning applications and derailing developments. [LWEC's latest policy and practice note](#) provides some practical guidance on defining these kinds of shared cultural values.

4 Beans counting for bees?

English arable farmers are now allowed to include leguminous crops as counting towards requirements for Ecological Focus Areas but [in a recent blog for the Valuing Nature Network](#) Lynn Dicks questions the benefits to bees, particularly if these crops are being sprayed regularly with pesticides and fungicide.

5 New policy and practice notes promise research results with a buzz

The Insect Pollinator Initiative is funding a number of new LWEC Policy and Practice Notes drawing on findings over the next year. [What is causing the decline in pollinating insects?](#) is already available in the [LWEC series](#) and will be complemented by notes on topics such as crop management for maximising pollination services, managing pests and diseases of bees and the effects of pesticides on pollinators.

6 Deformed Wing Virus a threat to pollinators

Research carried out at the University of Warwick as part of the [Insect Pollinators Initiative](#) shows how Deformed Wing Virus has been transformed into a major disease thanks to the parasitic mite *Varroa destructor*. The virus is widespread in UK honeybees and is usually harmless. However *Varroa* transmission amplifies a virulent form of the virus associated with disease, reducing foraging ability and increasing mortality. The findings could lead to informed breeding programmes for *Varroa* and virus resistance to help safeguard insect pollinators. [A paper is available in PLoS Pathogens](#).

7 Newcastle University takes rural issues to heart of political debate

Entrepreneurs are losing out because of a lack of rural-proofing in government policy, say academics from Newcastle University's Queen's Award winning Centre for Rural Economy (CRE). In [Reimagining the rural: What's missing in UK rural policy?](#) they recommend that policymakers ensure regional growth bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities have a strong remit to reflect the diversity of rural businesses. The paper was launched at the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham on 28 September.

8 Collaboration can be a fishy business

Is collaboration and participation the key to improving fisheries' management and embedding long-term sustainability in interactions with our seas? The GAP2 project

answers an emphatic 'yes' to this question with the release of a striking new [6 minute feature film](#), showcasing the project's work on bringing together fishers, scientists and policy makers in fisheries across Europe.

9 Not just any old bog

What could be interesting about an old bog? In his [inaugural lecture as Professor of Interdisciplinary Environmental Research](#) at Birmingham City University Mark Reed challenges us to look differently at Britain's most overlooked landscapes. He uses science, poetry, music and award-winning photography to explain why all of our lives depend on these places and examines how we and our decision-makers need a new way of thinking if we are to solve the environmental challenges facing us today.

10 How an urban meadow is boosting biodiversity

What can a strip of land between the M1 motorway and Luton Airport Luton tell us about urban biodiversity? In a [Planet Earth Podcast](#) Helen Hoyle of the University of Sheffield and Jim Harris from Cranfield University explain what a [Biodiversity and Ecosystems Service Sustainability](#) project aims to achieve by sowing experimental meadow strips in an urban setting.

11 Agritech Water Cluster launched

Everyone on the planet needs water, and we need collaboration if it is to be managed properly for everyone. The University of East Anglia has launched the Agritech Water Cluster to identify and encourage new collaboration between the agritech and water industry and researchers. They are actively seeking industry partners from across the agritech industry, including farmers, landowners, agritech and technology companies and water suppliers. For more information get in touch with project manager Dr Ruth Welters agritechwatercluster@uea.ac.uk or follow the project on twitter [@agritechwater](#)

12 Nature is good for everyone

There is growing evidence for how the natural environment underpins economic growth and contributes to people's wellbeing. [A webinar from the Ecosystems Knowledge Network, Local Nature Local Growth, exploring this topic is now available on line](#). It features [Wild Anglia](#) (the Local Nature Partnership for Suffolk and Norfolk), [New Anglia](#) (the counterpart Local Enterprise Partnership) and [Natural England](#).

13 Relu Director becomes Professor Emeritus

Newcastle University's Duke of Northumberland Professor of Rural Economy Philip Lowe, who led the UK Research Councils' £25 million Rural Economy and Land Use programme, retired this month but will continue to maintain his research links at Newcastle's Centre for Rural Economy as Professor Emeritus.

14 Sustainable Intensification Platform will develop better measures

Sustainable intensification – increasing farm productivity while avoiding negative environmental and social impacts – is going to be key to ensuring future productivity. With this in mind, Defra's 3-year, £4.5m Sustainable Intensification Platform was officially launched in London on 30th September 2014. Involving a consortium of stakeholders spanning research and practice, the project involves three interlinked projects led by Exeter University, National Institute of Agricultural Botany and ADAS. These projects will develop improved indicators for measuring different sustainable intensification interventions and their impact and test these at farm and then landscape scale, as well as examining the external influences on farmers' productivity and the sustainability of their practices. [Landbridge](#) is involved as a dissemination partner to promote engagement between the Platform and the land advisory professions.

15 LWEC scientists in the global arena

Four LWEC scientists have been selected to take part in the first global thematic assessment to be conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Simon Potts and Tom Breeze of Reading University, Adam Vanbergen of the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Lynn Dicks of Cambridge University are all playing key roles in this assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production. It will be carried out over the next 16 months.

16 Bold thinking from the Nexus Network

Better use of organic waste materials for food and energy production, imagining a sewerless society, using citizen science and self-organising science community to deliver sustainable agriculture – just a few of the topics touched upon in 13 successful applications to the ESRC Nexus Network thinkpiece call of June 2014. The successful articles will be launched at the Nexus conference on 27 November so look out for them on the [website](#). The conference "What works at the nexus? New connections in food, energy, water and

environment” is an opportunity for network members to meet, hear high-profile keynote speakers, discuss nexus challenges from a variety of perspectives, and find out about possibilities for collaboration. [Registration is now open.](#)

17 Visit the new Water Security Knowledge Exchange Portal

Businesses, policymakers and regulators can see how the water-related problems have been addressed by others and find the data they need to tackle future challenges by consulting the [WSKEPortal](#). This new website is designed for users of water research and provides a fast introduction to national-scale datasets. It includes 60 case studies that demonstrate the efficacy of high-quality research, and puts you in touch with researchers. The WSKEPortal is an output of the [Water Security Knowledge Exchange Programme](#) - a long-term initiative that was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council.

18 Why do we need peat?

In a blog on the [Ecosystems Services Community Scotland website](#) Mark Reed, Aletta Bonn, Chris Evans, Klaus Glenk and Julia Martin-Ortega say that peatlands provide ideal case study in which to ask questions about links between the science and values associated with ecosystem service delivery of an asset provided by nature. They argue for the importance of a sound scientific underpinning to ecosystem service valuation and payment schemes and propose a cost effective approach to assess the links between pressures, ecosystem functions and ecosystem services using “pressure-response functions”.

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