

Full details

All details held on the selected case study are shown below.

Went live on	Title	Reference
22 Jul 2011	The changing role of local government in managing water resources - help from RELU	SID0308

Synopsis

The UK Research Councils Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme looks at how local government is taking on new responsibilities for managing natural resources, including water, and examines the challenges and opportunities.

Description

Across the UK local government is being asked to take on new responsibilities for managing natural resources, including water. With that in mind, a new policy and practice note from the UK Research Councils' Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU) has been designed specifically to inform a local government audience.

It draws on research from across RELU to support local authorities in addressing new water challenges and responsibilities and was part-funded by LARCI - the Local Authorities and Research Councils' Initiative.

The 'Big Society' vision of the coalition government is likely to reinforce the localization process. European legislation is also making new demands - including the Water Framework Directive (WFD) - and climate change adds to the mix.

But the document points out that as well as challenges 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 risk.

Insights from the RELU programme are potentially far-reaching, say the report's authors David Farnsworth and Alan Woods. They demonstrate the opportunities for more effective methods of stakeholder engagement, alternative governance models, collaboration at different spatial scales and changes to organisational culture, all of which may allow resources to be re-deployed and new local capacity to be found.

On flooding - the Floodplains project has highlighted the role of farmland in flood mitigation, beyond the current emphasis on its role for flood storage.

On water quality - the Catchment Management project revealed a strong local demand from stakeholders for water-quality monitoring data. The project developed an annual ecosystems report card that provides an easy-to-understand snapshot of the health of a catchment's aquatic environment for circulation to the general public, major stakeholders and politicians.

On spatial planning and land use - the Floodplains project has identified methods to assess the value of conservation and the costs associated with flooding. These can then be used locally to inform understanding of the trade-off between different types of benefits and costs associated with land and water management options, and their impacts on different stakeholder groups.

The Water Framework Directive project has examined the financial impact of changing land management to meet the policy expectations contained within the WFD.

Farnsworth and Woods say that RELU research should help local government anticipate the future strategic direction of water policy. As legislation such as the WFD is implemented, one likely option might be to devolve greater responsibility, and the requisite resources, to local government bodies.

This could happen within the national policy framework for implementing the Directive, as mediated through River Basin Management Plans. The authors conclude that more weight could then be given to local concerns and priorities, while retaining an appropriate level of national consistency.

References and links

Hyperlinks

1. [RELU - Water Policy Practice Note](#)

Impacts

Impact evidence

Insights from the RELU programme are potentially far-reaching. They demonstrate the opportunity for more effective methods of stakeholder engagement, alternative governance models,

	collaboration at different spatial scales and changes to organisational culture, all of which allow for re-deploying resources and finding new local capacity.
Key outputs	Policy change

Research and funding	
Funding type	Research Programme
Published	August 2010

Classification	
Science themes	Biodiversity, Sustainable use of natural resources, Natural hazards, Environment, pollution and human health
Science areas	Freshwater
Policy areas	EU requirements, Land use, Natural resources, Planning, Water
Keywords	Water, Water quality