

Muddy water blasted with neutron beams

WHEN Helen Jarvie wanted to analyse a sample of river water she took the unusual step of blasting it with neutron beams at the ISIS facility (Rutherford Appleton Laboratory), just a short hop away from her office at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology in Wallingford.

Helen and her colleague, CCLRC scientist Stephen King, were awarded beam time at ISIS to look at how nanoparticles behave in a range of freshwater environments, such as river water, river bed sediments, agricultural field drainage and slurry.

'Water quality scientists and regulators are increasingly aware of the significance of nanoparticles in the environment and their potential effects on ecology and human health and there is a major need for new analytical techniques to provide us with better understanding of the structure, stability and interactions of nanoparticles in the aquatic environment,' she said.

Contact Helen Jarvie at hj@ceh.ac.uk. NERC's Environmental Nanoscience initiative began in September 2006.



In brief

Atmospheric centres renamed

The NERC Centres for Atmospheric Science (NCAS) was officially renamed the National Centre for Atmospheric Science, at a ceremony on 29 September.

Sir Crispin Tickell formally congratulated NCAS staff, 'You have good cause to be proud, not only of what you have achieved but of what you will achieve in the future.'

Atlas of UK energy – launched online

A new website, launched by the UK Energy Research Centre, will help plan future energy research. The website, known as the Energy Research Atlas, is the first tool to show the live status of energy research and development in the UK. UKERC research director Jim Skea, said, 'The Atlas is intended to be a living resource, updated in response to changing circumstances and reflecting informed opinion from those in the energy research field.' See: www.ukerc.ac.uk

Protecting marine mammals from underwater loud noises



Chris A Cunliffe/Alamy

A NEW course designed to train scientists and engineers to become better marine mammal observers will help protect whales and dolphins that swim close to ships using loud underwater acoustic devices in scientific experiments or in exploration work.

The three-day course, which starts 26 January 2007, is intended for those with limited offshore experience. It incorporates modules on marine mammal biology, observation techniques, the potential effects of underwater noise, modern seismic survey techniques and worldwide mitigation guidelines.

The course, only the second to be accredited by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, was set up by the University of Plymouth and WGP Projects Ltd using a NERC Knowledge Transfer Partnership grant.

The grant will also fund postgraduate Ross Compton to investigate the relationship between underwater noises generated by the exploration industry and marine mammals.

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Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
www.nerc.ac.uk/using/schemes

Planet Earth now available in Chinese

THE CHINESE government has translated a number of back issues of *Planet Earth* and other NERC publications to print, publish and distribute in China.

Jin Zhiyong, First Secretary at the Chinese Embassy in London, said, 'We have set up an informal agreement to translate *Planet Earth*. We will start by printing 5,000 copies and then, depending how that goes, we will discuss with NERC's editor the possibility of printing more copies in the future.'

'It is very important that the Chinese people have access to the latest information on



environmental science,' he added.

The translations will be available to the general public, schoolchildren and teachers, as well as academics and policy makers.