

# UK human geography is on top of the world

The Society has had reason to celebrate recently, with the news that a benchmarking review has ranked the UK's human geography research the best in the world.

The sixth and final of a series of reviews led by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the analysis found that in the UK, human geography is an innovative, diverse, vibrant discipline that sets the intellectual agenda in many areas; publishes more than its fair share of major disciplinary journals; leads the way in terms of the number and reach of published journal articles; and has produced a large number of seminal publications - both books and articles. It was also noted that the discipline is radically interdisciplinary, regularly exporting ideas to other disciplines, and has had a substantial impact on policy and practice. (Examples of this impact can be found in the Society's 'Making the case for geography' series of policy briefings.)

The ESRC is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues, providing support for numerous researchers in geography departments around the country. Each of the reviews it has undertaken has been conducted in partnership with learned societies associated with the discipline under review. In this case, the review was carried out in collaboration with the Society and another major funder of human geography research, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The aim of the benchmarking reviews was to highlight the standing and contribution of British social science research in an international context. They were also designed to identify ways of enhancing capacity and to help to promote and shape future research agendas.

The Society's director, Dr Rita Gardner, acted as chair of the steering committee, which was made up of prominent British academics, users of human geography research and funders. The group, in consultation with the British human geography community, appointed a panel of leading international experts, chaired by Professor David Ley of the University of British Columbia, to undertake the review. The final report was launched at an event hosted by the Society and chaired by the ESRC's chief executive, Professor Paul Boyle of the University of St Andrews.

'[Human geography] is such a key subject in helping to understand and address many of the environmental,



economic and social challenges that the world and the UK face,' Rita said. 'At a time when impact is increasingly seen as important, the fact that the panel highlighted the range, clear strategic intent and effectiveness of engagement between scholars and the users of research in human geography is also especially welcome. We look forward to working with the research councils and the higher education community to take forward the recommendations of the review.'

The research councils were also pleased by the review's findings. The AHRC's associate director of programmes, Gary Grubb said that he welcomed the panel's 'affirmation of the international standing and leadership of UK historical and cultural geography, which is also reflected in their important contributions to the AHRC's themes and programmes'. Professor Boyle said that he was 'delighted by the panel's finding that UK human geography ranks first in the world'.

■ For further details, visit [www.rgs.org/rhedpolicy](http://www.rgs.org/rhedpolicy) and [www.rgs.org/makingthecase](http://www.rgs.org/makingthecase)



## ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY (WITH IBG)

### SELECTION OF EVENTS FOR MAY

**Until 20 May**

**Britain from the Air**  
(Outdoor exhibition, Edinburgh)

An opportunity to celebrate, explore and be inspired, this street gallery encourages visitors to learn about and enjoy Britain's varied landscapes. Viewers can explore their local, regional and national environment from a completely different perspective and view Britain from above on the giant walk-on map of the nation. Free to view and accessible 24 hours a day.

📍 For further details, visit [www.britainfromtheair.com](http://www.britainfromtheair.com)

**2 May, 7pm**

**(Lecture, Southampton)**  
**Aquifers: the vital role of groundwater in alleviating poverty**

Richard Taylor will outline how groundwater resources in the tropics are playing an increasingly important role in sustaining supplies of food and drinking water in countries trying to adapt to climate change. Joint event with the University of Southampton.

📍 Tickets: free for members of RGS-IBG or the university (and one guest); non-members £5. For further details, visit [www.rgs.org/south](http://www.rgs.org/south)

**7 May - 14 June**

**(Exhibition, London)**  
**Innovation Everest**

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of the first successful ascent of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in May 1953, this exhibition examines some of the innovative technologies that were used during that expedition and compares them with the modern materials and equipment in use today.

📍 Free exhibition, open to all. Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm. For further details, visit [www.rgs.org/exhibitions](http://www.rgs.org/exhibitions)

**19 May, 2pm**

**(Field visit, Warwick)**  
**Discovering Britain: Warwick**

Retired town planner Martin Haslett will lead his Discovering Britain walk around the historic West Midlands town of Warwick, using his local knowledge to tell the story of the development of this interesting settlement over the past 1,000 years, from being chosen as the site for a castle by William the Conqueror in the 11th century to becoming a busy county town.

📍 Tickets: £5 (book by 13 May). For more information, visit [www.rgs.org/midlands](http://www.rgs.org/midlands)

**23 May - 9 June**

**(Exhibition, London)**  
**Everest 1953**

A major photographic exhibition and fine art sale of 40 limited edition photographic prints in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the first successful ascent of Mount Everest. Venue: The Oxo Gallery, Oxo Tower Wharf, Barge House Street, Southwark, SE1 9PH.

📍 Free exhibition, open to all. Monday to Sunday, 11am-6pm

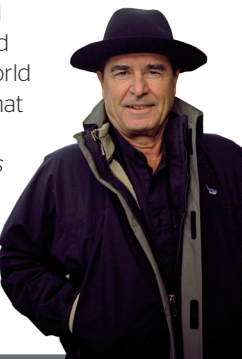


**31 May, 7pm**

**(Interview, London)**  
**Discovering People: Paul Theroux**

A conversation with Paul Theroux, one of the world's greatest and best-loved travel writers. Paul will discuss his influences and share his thoughts on the world and the remarkable places that he has visited.

📍 Tickets: RGS-IBG members £7, non-members £10. Book online at [www.rgs.org/whatson](http://www.rgs.org/whatson) or call the Events Office on 020 7591 3100



The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is a leading world centre for geographers and geographical learning. One of our aims is to stimulate the awareness and enjoyment of the subject to a diverse range of people.

Geography is about the understanding of the people, places and environments of our world, the processes by which they are changing, and the interconnections between them - both locally and globally.

The Society carries out a wide range of activities to support its aims. We support research groups; promote geography within the national curriculum; produce scholarly publications; provide training in scientific field techniques and expeditions; offer information through our large map collection, library and picture library; and engage the wider public through our popular national lecture series.

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Advancing geography and geographical learning



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