

Science Policy Newsletter – a weekly round-up of policy headlines and stories

14 August 2018

News

Top stories

[Billion-pound backing for British innovation](#)

Britain's world-leading researchers and entrepreneurs will benefit from an additional £780 million to create the technologies of tomorrow.

[£90 million to help feed the 9 billion](#)

The first funding from a £90 million fund that aims to revolutionise how food is produced and dramatically reduce its environmental impact launches later this month.

Health and biomedicine

[Suicide prevention plan](#)

Action to reduce suicide rate by 20% by 2022.

[Bowel cancer screening to start earlier at age 50 in England](#)

[Women need more realistic data on egg-freezing success, say experts](#)

Clinics should release information on pregnancy rates based on age, says the RCOG.

[Blue light from phone screens accelerates blindness, study finds](#)

Light from digital devices triggers creation of toxic molecule in the retina that can cause macular degeneration.

Agriculture and fishery

[Early loans for farmers being made available](#)

Funding released to help mitigate impacts of adverse weather.

Environment and ecology

[£6 million to explore impact of hazardous chemicals on UK ecosystems](#)

NERC has awarded £6 million to investigate the effects that potentially hazardous chemicals used by humans are having on UK habitats and wildlife.

[Threatened sand dunes given a new lease of LIFE](#)

Major sand dune conservation project awarded £4.3 million of funding.

[Elusive nightjar back at RSPB Sandy reserve](#)

[Scotland's mountain hare population is at just 1% of 1950s level](#)

Culling and loss of moorland in favour of conifer forests blamed for severe decline in wildlife.

[Michael Gove accused of letting wealthy grouse moor owners off the hook](#)

Papers show UK environment secretary suggested owners voluntarily end controversial practice of burning heather to head off threat of compulsory ban.

Animal Research

[Animal Sentience and Brexit](#)

The Government is reviewing the recognition of animal sentience and the need for UK legislation after Brexit. It has also announced it will legislate to increase the maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences.

You can read the RSB response to Defra's consultation on the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill [here](#).

Exiting the EU

[Brexit and the environment](#)

A House of Commons Library Briefing paper discussing current environmental law and policy in the UK and in the devolved nations; preparations for Brexit and potential impacts of Brexit; and actions and proposals being taken at a domestic level for both the UK and each of the nations in the UK.

You can read the RSB response to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry into the Government's 25-Year Plan for the Environment [here](#).

Research funding and higher education policy

[How we judge research outputs when making funding decisions](#)

Robert Kiley, Head of Open Research, and Jim Smith, Director of Science, discuss the steps Wellcome is taking to fulfil the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).

Schools education policy

[More than 20,000 Scottish students receive biology results today](#)

Results season for secondary students across the UK kicked off today, with students receiving their results across all levels of awards in Scotland.

Public engagement

[UK science centres to receive funding boost to inspire more visitors to explore and discover science](#)

6 science centres across the UK have received £13 million between them through the Inspiring Science Fund to engage new visitors.

International news

[Gene-silencing technology gets first drug approval after 20-year wait](#)

The US Food and Drug Administration's decision breathes new life into RNA-interference therapies.

[Palm oil: A new threat to Africa's monkeys and apes?](#)

[Breakthrough as New Caledonia votes to protect coral reef](#)

The Pacific Island is home to one of the world's most pristine coral reefs, boasting more than 9,300 marine species.

[WHO warns about health risks of wildfires and dry summer in Europe](#)

Europe's wildfires combined with the extreme warm weather can pose additional health risks to people living in affected areas, the World Health Organisation has warned.

[Tax havens shielding companies responsible for deforestation and overfishing](#)

70% of vessels implicated in illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing are registered in tax havens, report finds.

[India cracks down on plagiarism at universities](#)

But some researchers say new rules don't go far enough.

[Canadian scientists welcome new research integrity policy](#)

The government says it will do more to protect federal scientists from political interference.

Opinion

[A no-deal Brexit would be a disaster for the UK science community](#)

The clock is ticking to March 2019 and scientists are worried that when the chips are down and the negotiations tense, science will be sacrificed in the name of ideology.

[Popping the bubble](#)

A recent report from innovation foundation NESTA suggested the existence of a 'biomedical bubble' that had caused research expenditure in this area to grow disproportionately. MRC executive chair Professor Fiona Watt takes a closer look at the claims.

[Europe's GM legislation is 'outdated', US says after Court ruling on gene editing](#)

US Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has called a recent ruling by the European Court of Justice on new plant-breeding techniques (NPBTs) a 'setback' and said Washington is ready to help EU politicians make decisions based on scientific evidence.

[Global warming could be in reverse by 2050 if we take action now – Chad Frischmann](#)

We could get to the stage where atmospheric greenhouse gases are in decline – a point known as drawdown – and begin to reverse global warming before 2050, but it will require us adopting solutions at an aggressive rate, according to Chad Frischmann, vice-president and research director of Project Drawdown.

Opportunities

[The Pitch: ideas to positively change research culture](#)

This competition is an exclusive opportunity to pitch an idea or scheme to improve research culture in the UK and potentially receive a small grant to support its implementation.

Closes 7 September 2018.

[Prepare now for Environmental Farming Scheme \(Wider\) opening on 20 August 2018](#)

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has announced that a second tranche of the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Wider will open for applications on Monday 20 August 2018.

Closes 21 September 2018.

[Places of science](#)

Supporting communities to engage with science through museums and their collections.

Closes 26 September 2018.

[BSI mentoring scheme launch](#)

12-15 early career scientists will be paired up with experienced immunologists from different host institutions. Over a 12 month period, mentors and mentees will hold a series of meetings that can be used to discuss career development, barriers faced at work and overcoming tough work situations.

Closes 21 October 2018.

[New competition: Biosensing across wide areas](#)

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) is launching a new competition to find solutions for rapidly detecting and locating hazardous biological agents deposited in the field.

Closes 7 November 2018.

Consultations

[Call for evidence on conducting ethical research in global health emergencies](#)

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has launched a call for evidence to inform its inquiry on the ethical issues raised when conducting research in global health emergencies.

Closes 17 August 2018.

[Public Consultation on the evaluation of the Ozone Regulation](#)

Closes 24 August 2018.

[Public consultation on the interim evaluation of the direct management under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund \(EMFF\)](#)

Closes 3 September 2018.

[Committee asks for views on the rural economy](#)

The Select Committee on the Rural Economy has published its call for evidence and invites submissions from all interested individuals and organisations.

Closes 10 September 2018.

[Tackling plastic pollution](#)

Deposit return scheme consultation.

Closes 25 September 2018.

[Balance and effectiveness of research and innovation spending inquiry launched](#)

The Science and Technology Select Committee of the House of Commons is undertaking an inquiry on the balance and effectiveness of research and innovation spending. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact consultation@rsb.org.uk for more information and if you would like to contribute.

Closes 28 September 2018.

[Draft guidance and criteria set out detailed arrangements for REF 2021](#)

The UK's four higher education funding bodies have published the draft guidance and criteria on making submissions to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, for consultation.

Closes 15 October 2018.

[Technologies for meeting Clean Growth emissions reduction targets inquiry](#)

The Science and Technology Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the technologies needed to meet Clean Growth emissions reduction targets.

Closes 26 October 2018.

Events

[Kent, Surrey and Sussex: Illustrated talk on the health and conservation of the marine environment along the south coast](#)

15 August 2018, Brighton

Discover the marine fauna of the south east coast, its health and conservation with a talk by Tim Dapling, Chief Fishery Officer of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

[Aquaculture Research Collaborative Hub UK annual science event](#)

4 - 5 September 2018, Belfast, Northern Ireland

On 4th-5th September 2018, ARCH-UK will be holding the 1st Annual Science Meeting in Belfast at the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Headquarters, Newforge Lane.

[Fellows' Lunch - Cardiff](#)

13 September 2018, Cardiff

A small informal lunch to provide Fellows of the Society with the opportunity to discuss current biological issues and the Society's overall direction.

[Workshop on AMR in the Environment](#)

10 - 14 September 2018, Buenos Aires, Argentina

A BBSRC and CONICET partnering workshop on AMR in the Environment in Buenos Aires.

[Tackling Antimicrobial Resistance](#)

17 September 2018, London

A joint event organised by the BTS, the Royal Society of Chemistry Toxicology Group and the British Society of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy.

[BBSRC Artificial Intelligence in Biology Workshop](#)

4 October 2018, John Innes Conference Centre, Norwich

Recent developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are transforming many aspects of technology and engineering. This workshop will explore how such approaches could be used in biological research.

[Research culture: Changing expectations](#)

29 - 30 October, Royal Society, London

Research culture: changing expectations will bring together intertwined debates around research assessment, career progression, researcher development, research dissemination and research integrity. This conference will showcase initiatives and work across the research landscape to continue to create and improve the cultural conditions and environments in which excellent research and researchers can flourish.

And finally...

[Marine Mammals Have Lost a Gene That Now They May Desperately Need](#)

Dolphins, manatees, sea lions, elephant seals and other animals no longer produce an enzyme that protects land mammals against harmful chemicals, including some pesticides.

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