

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

14 August 2019

### News

#### Royal Society of Biology news

##### [RSB comments on PM's plan to 'cement the UK as a science superpower' by shaking up immigration rules for scientists](#)

"It is not enough for the UK to be a possible destination; we must continue to be a popular one," is at the heart of a response from the RSB to the Prime Minister's new plans to introduce a fast-track visa route for scientists.

##### [Biology fourth most popular Advanced Higher for Scotland](#)

Students in secondary schools across Scotland have received their exam results today from the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

#### Health and biomedicine

##### [Alzheimer's and dementia leading cause of death in England and Wales](#)

Experts call for urgent action to tackle 'biggest health crisis of our time'

##### ['Lack of evidence' holding back cannabis medicines](#)

##### [Teens who hit puberty later could face bone health issues later in life, studies suggest](#)

##### [Health Secretary announces £250 million investment in artificial intelligence](#)

A new National Artificial Intelligence Lab will use the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the health and lives of patients.

#### Agriculture and fisheries

##### [Farmer produces ethical king prawns in a Lincolnshire field](#)

Most warm water prawns sold in UK are imported from Asia and are tainted with allegations of slavery and environmental destruction

### [Anglers urged to protect fish stocks in warm weather](#)

An innovative pilot project is set to help protect vulnerable fish stocks in the Broads during the warm weather period.

### [UK needs to ramp up sustainable farming to maintain food security, government advisers say](#)

'We have an opportunity with Brexit to reform our farming policy,' says Professor Piers Forster

### ***For more plant science policy news from the RSB...***

*To keep up date with plant science policy news and activities of the [UK Plant Sciences Federation \(UKPSF\)](#), please sign up to our monthly newsletter. Log into [mySociety](#) and choose 'My Subscriptions' under 'Me and the RSB', then check 'Plant Science newsletter' to subscribe.*

## Environment and ecology

### [Grouse shooting: Labour calls for review amid habitat concerns](#)

### [Record-breaking year for hen harrier breeding](#)

It has been a record breeding season for hen harriers in England according to figures from Natural England.

### [Where are the bees? Tracking down which flowers they pollinate](#)

Earlham Institute (EI), with the University of East Anglia (UEA), have developed a new method to rapidly identify the sources of bee pollen to understand which flowers are important for bees.

### [Secret Brexit legislation around environmental protections 'must be revealed by government'](#)

'Releasing information for public scrutiny is a key pillar of our democracy,' says Greenpeace

## Climate and energy

### [Eat less meat: UN climate change report calls for change to human diet](#)

The report on global land use and agriculture from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change comes amid accelerating deforestation in the Amazon.

### [Action to address climate emergency](#)

## Waste

### [Cigarette butts are toxic plastic pollution. Should they be banned?](#)

Trillions of cigarette butts are thrown into the environment every year, where they leach nicotine and heavy metals before turning into microplastic pollution.

## Government and Parliament

### [Government pledges to protect science and research post Brexit](#)

World-leading research in the UK will be protected following Brexit, as the UK government pledges additional support for researchers and businesses.

### [PM sets out vision to cement UK as a science superpower](#)

The world's top scientists will be encouraged to move to the UK under a shake-up of immigration rules announced by the Prime Minister today.

### [Much-needed visa reform needs to be swiftly followed by a UK-EU deal for science](#)

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [Funding for science research in universities in jeopardy, warns Lords Committee](#)

### [UK joins forces with international experts to tackle global challenges](#)

### [Tuition fees cut could be devastating for universities, say peers](#)

Committee says struggling universities would need to be compensated with grants

## Open access and publication policy

### [Journal's plan to review preprints aims to kill 'desk rejects'](#)

eLife editor says radical shift would help readers judge the real value of research, not just where it is published

## Business and industry

### [More than £16 million Innovate UK and private equity investment into companies confirmed](#)

## Diversity and inclusion

### [Building the anti-racist classroom](#)

Building the Anti-Racist Classroom is a collective that has comprised five women of colour working as academics in higher education in the UK and Australia.

## Ethics

### [Unethical work must be filtered out or flagged](#)

Researchers need guidance on how to handle published work whose ethics have been questioned, argue Graeme D. Ruxton and Tom Mulder.

## Outreach and engagement

### [Raising the bar in policy engagement](#)

The growth in university public affairs teams has been notable in recent years. Driven primarily by the REF and increased political attention on the sector, many universities

have looked to beef up their capabilities. How this works in practice varies by institution, but the effect is the same: policy impact has gone professional.

## Digital technologies

### [Fin tech: underwater robot monitors sharks in Scottish waters](#)

'SharkCam' could shed light on sex lives of basking sharks in Sea of the Hebrides

### [Women in labour given virtual reality to ease pain of childbirth](#)

### [Smart sensors listen to healing wounds](#)

### [The AI revolution in science: applications and new research directions](#)

#### **For more on the topic of artificial intelligence..**

As part of Biology Week in October 2018, the Royal Society of Biology organised a debate on artificial intelligence (AI) at the Royal Institution. The debate is available to [watch in full online.](#)

## International news

### [Giant freshwater fishes are in alarming decline](#)

The plunge in numbers of these enormous species is part of a broader downward trend in freshwater megafauna.

### [Germany may introduce 'meat tax' to protect the environment](#)

Currently meat has reduced tax rate of 7 per cent but politicians say it should increase to 19

### [Sharing seeds could help farmers grow better food](#)

Tapping into the genetic diversity contained within the seeds of wild relatives and forgotten crop plants could help farmers decrease their dependency on global agribusiness and grow food better suited to local conditions.

### [China approves ethics advisory group after CRISPR-babies scandal](#)

Bioethicists hope a national committee will help close loopholes in the country's biomedical ethics regulations.

## People

### [Dr Matthew Duchars to head up £67 million cutting-edge vaccines centre at Harwell Campus](#)

## Opportunities

### [Membership of the Veterinary Products Committee](#)

The Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) is looking to appoint four new members.  
**Closes: 23 August 2019**

### [Get creative in this biotechnology photo competition](#)

This MeMBrane photo competition is an opportunity to get creative and take pictures of 'Biotechnology in Action'. Send your pictures to [MeMBrane@aston.ac.uk](mailto:MeMBrane@aston.ac.uk)  
**Closes: 1 September 2019**

### **Royal Society of Biology, Outreach and Engagement Volunteering Opportunities**

RSB are looking for local volunteers to help run our hands-on science activities at [Abergavenny Food Festival 2019](#) at Abergavenny, Wales, on **21st – 22nd September 2019**; [Big Biology Day Cambridge](#) at Cambridge CB2 8PE, on **5th October 2019**; and at [Conwy Feast](#), at Conwy, Wales, on **26th – 27th October 2019**. If you live nearby and are interested in volunteering to help the RSB outreach team deliver our hands-on science activities please email Dr Amanda Hardy via [outreach@rsb.org.uk](mailto:outreach@rsb.org.uk)

### **Authors wanted for OUP-RSB biology primers**

The RSB and Oxford University Press are looking for academic authors to contribute to the ongoing Oxford Biology Primers series of textbooks. Experts in fields including microbiology, stem cells, ageing, and the microbiome are encouraged to contact [tom.ireland@rsb.org.uk](mailto:tom.ireland@rsb.org.uk) for more details. The third book in the series, Hormones, is out now, with further titles available to pre-order [here](#).

## Consultations

### [Fishing opportunities for 2020 under the common fisheries policy](#)

**Closes: 20 August 2019**

### [Non-elephant ivory trade: call for evidence](#)

**Closes: 22 August 2019**

### [Biosecurity and human health: preparing for emerging infectious diseases and bioweapons inquiry](#)

**Closes: 6 September 2019**

### [National strategy on clinical trial transparency](#)

**Closes: 6 September 2019**

### [Adding folic acid to flour](#)

**Closes: 9 September 2019**

### [Management measures for widely spread Invasive Alien Species \(IAS\) in England and Wales](#)

**Closes: 12 September 2019**

### [Call for evidence on the use of genome editing in farmed animals](#)

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has launched a call for evidence to inform its inquiry into the use of genome editing techniques in farmed animals. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk) for more information and if you would like to contribute.

**Closes: 20 September 2019**

### [Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living](#)

**Closes: 20 September 2019**

### [Improving higher technical education](#)

**Closes: 29 September 2019**

### [Standards for biodegradable, compostable and bio-based plastics: call for evidence](#)

**Closes: 14 October 2019**

## Events

### [Everything You Wanted to Know about Genomics but Were Afraid to Ask](#)

**4 September 2019**

Science and Industry Museum, Manchester

### [EDIS Symposium 2019 - Inclusive Research and Experimental Design](#)

**9 September 2019**

The Francis Crick Institute, London

### [Pharmacology and Drug Discovery Workshop 2019](#)

**19 - 20 September 2019**

Manchester Conference Centre, Manchester

### [Women in Biotech - Cambridge Edition](#)

**26 September 2019**

Babraham Research Campus, Cambridge

### [Bioscience Careers Day 2019](#)

**26 October 2019**

Middlesex University, London

The Bioscience Careers Day (BCD) is the perfect opportunity to get your career on track - whether you are interested in working in research, science communication or even if you just want to know what options are available to you once you finish your bioscience degree. Our top programme will enhance your prospects. Find out what happened last year in our [YouTube video](#). Visit [here](#) for full details and to buy your £10 ticket. Direct queries to Harriet McAra at [events@rsb.org.uk](mailto:events@rsb.org.uk)

### [Organ-on-a-chip: Current Gaps and Future Directions](#)

**2 December 2019**

GSK Medicines Research Centre, Stevenage

### [Quantitative Methods in Gene Regulation V](#)

**9 - 10 December 2019**

Institute of Physics, London

## And finally...

### [112-year-old fish has broken a longevity record](#)

According to radiocarbon dating, when the bigmouth buffalo in question was born, World War I had not yet broken out.

### **In the latest issue of The Biologist...**

The August issue of The Biologist looks at [new uses for sporopollenin](#) - a remarkable polymer that makes pollen one of nature's toughest materials. It also has features on:

- How to get involved with the [UK's space biology programmes](#)
  - 10 years of collaborative efforts to [rethink how we value nature](#)
  - How ['cryobanking' gametes](#) is helping conserve biodiversity
  - How researchers may be behind [the spread of invasive species in Antarctica](#)
- ... And much more – highlights of all recent issues are available [here](#).

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