

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

17 January 2020

This newsletter provides links to published news articles, preserving the original title and summary line. Views or opinions presented are those of the original author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Royal Society of Biology.

News

Top stories

[UN draft plan sets 2030 target to avert Earth's sixth mass extinction](#)

Paris-style proposal to counter loss of ecosystems and wildlife vital to the future of humanity will go before October summit

[Half of UK universities have committed to divest from fossil fuel](#)

78 out of 154 universities joined campaign in blow to big oil's 'social licence', campaigners say

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB voices concern as findings reveal that researchers face “shocking” levels of stress](#)

A new survey has revealed the impact the research environment has on the levels of stress and mental health issues experienced by researchers, which RSB chief executive has described as a real cause for concern.

[RSB Fellows named in 2020 New Year Honours](#)

The 2020 New Year Honours List recognises a number of RSB Fellows for their work in the sciences.

Health and biomedicine

[Loss of clinical academics risks patient care, warn UK medics](#)

Falling numbers of NHS-based scholars and lack of research time must be reversed, warns Academy of Medical Sciences

[How psychologists can help people coping with life threatening food allergies](#)

[Why do people develop chronic pain?](#)

Mood disorders and the discovery of a pain signalling organ in the skin could explain why chronic pain occurs – and how to treat it.

[The risks behind the hype of stem-cell treatments](#)

[Body clock affects how the immune system works – new findings](#)

[Healthy habits extend disease-free life 'by up to a decade'](#)

Lifestyle keeps cardiovascular disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes at bay, research finds

Food and drink

[Quorn to be first major brand to introduce carbon labelling](#)

Carbon footprint data will help customers understand environmental impact of food

[Food 'made from air' could compete with soya](#)

['Most realistic' plant-based steak revealed](#)

Vegan alternatives to meat are popular but recreating the texture of steak is challenging

[Four ways to reduce the carbon in your food basket](#)

Agriculture and fisheries

[The deadly 'ghost gear' which haunts seas and coastlines](#)

[UK could put tariffs on food from countries with lower standards](#)

Environment secretary tells farmers WTO rules would allow UK to uphold standards

[Farmers could 'comfortably' cut emissions by a third](#)

Forestry

[National Trust to plant 20 million trees in UK over next decade](#)

Plan to cover area 1.5 times size of Manchester is part of goal to achieve net zero emissions

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

[National Trust's Wicken Fen reserve joins European 'rewilding' network](#)

[Trees and doodlebugs emit methane – the question is, how?](#)

Trees and insects may play a significant role in the emission of methane – a potent greenhouse gas – and improving our understanding of exactly how this happens could help in targeting more effective ways to fight global warming.

Water and air

[Air pollution: your exposure and health risk could depend on your class, ethnicity or gender](#)

[Air pollution could kill 160,000 in next decade – report](#)

British Heart Foundation predicts current total of 11,000 particulate-related deaths per year will continue to rise

Climate and energy

[Climate change: COP26 Glasgow will provide world stage for Scotland's green innovation](#)

[Bad COP, good COP?](#)

[Community-generated green electricity to be offered to all in UK](#)

Power provided on new tariff to come exclusively from small-scale wind and solar farms

[Britain's electricity since 2010: wind surges to second place, coal collapses and fossil fuel use nearly halves](#)

[Isle of Man commits to 75% renewable electricity by 2035](#)

[Inaction over climate emergency 'not an option' says UN Assembly chief](#)

Inaction when it comes to the fight back against damaging climate change is not an option, the President of the UN General Assembly told a major energy conference in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

Waste

['Kneejerk' move to plastic alternatives 'could be more damaging to environment'](#)

Paper bags, glass and wood often have higher carbon emissions than plastic and can be more difficult to reuse.

Government and Parliament

[Realising our ambition through science](#)

New report sets out a series of recommendations to put science and engineering at the heart of government policy.

[GO Science review of Government Science Capability](#)

Assistant Director Daniel Rathbone takes a look at the recently published Government Science Capability Review by the Government Office for Science

[Government call for science ‘weirdos’ prompts caution from researchers](#)

The UK prime minister’s adviser Dominic Cummings wants scientific approaches to inform government — but researchers worry his view is simplistic.

Research funding and higher education policy

[It's now beyond doubt: we need to reimagine the way research works](#)

[Researchers facing ‘shocking’ levels of stress, survey reveals](#)

Nearly two thirds of those who took part had witnessed bullying or harassment

[Universities could lose funding if they fail to tackle harassment](#)

Proposed sanctions may lead to universities being deregistered or barred from awarding degrees

[Tackling rudeness in higher education](#)

Rudeness, insensitive and disrespectful behaviour that defies social norms, is prevalent in most workplaces – with reports suggesting up to 98% of employees will encounter rudeness at some point in their working lives.

Schools education policy

[Prime Minister boosts schools with £14 billion package](#)

New funding delivers on pledge to level up per pupil funding across the country and includes £780 million for children with special educational needs.

Open access and publication policy

[Check for publication integrity before misconduct](#)

A tool that focuses on papers — not researcher behaviour — can help readers, editors and institutions assess which publications to trust.

RSB activity on publication policy

The RSB is signatory to a [response](#) to the cOAlition S consultation on transformative journals submitted on behalf of the Society Publishers Coalition (SocPC). RSB and several Member Organisations are members of the [SocPC](#). Please contact us at policy@rsb.org.uk to discuss publication or other policies.

Interested in publication policy news?

Sign-up via [mySociety](#) to our Research Communication Newsletter for monthly policy news with a focus on research communication and dissemination

Digital technologies

[MRI scanners built for two push limits of neuroimaging](#)

International news

[‘Deathly silent’: Ecologist describes Australian wildfires’ devastating aftermath](#)

Out-of-control blazes have killed a billion wild animals. Those remaining will struggle to survive in a scorched landscape, Michael Clarke tells Nature.

[The Bleak Future of Australian Wildlife](#)

The bushfires were a disaster waiting to happen for animals already fighting for survival.

[The Chinese paddlefish, one of the world's largest fish, has gone extinct](#)

Native to China’s Yangtze River, these fish grew 23 feet in length, but haven’t been spotted since 2003.

[The trick that could inject new life into an old tuberculosis vaccine](#)

The BCG vaccine is nearing its centenary. A new delivery method could protect more people from one of the world’s biggest killers.

[10 new birds discovered in 'lost world'](#)

A record-breaking expedition to three, little-explored Indonesian islands has revealed new species and subspecies of songbirds.

[US open access mandate seen as painful but needed](#)

Widely expected Plan S-style order hailed as ‘major boost’ to global movement

Opinion

[Academics must balance privacy and honesty to become great role models](#)

Diversity initiatives applaud role models but academics who are carers can have trouble relinquishing family privacy to share their experiences, says Sascha K. Hooker

[In defence of ‘imprecise’ medicine: the benefits of routine treatments for common diseases](#)

[AI is transforming medicine – but it can only work with proper sharing of data](#)

People

[James McCarthy, 1944-2019](#)

Environmentalist praised by Al Gore as 'eloquent' and 'passionate' authority on oceanic climate change

[Professor Vincenzo Cerundolo FRS 1959-2020](#)

[Sidney Holt obituary](#)

Fisheries scientist who fought for nearly 60 years to save great whales from extinction

[How scientists are coping with 'ecological grief'](#)

Scientists reveal how they are dealing with a profound sense of loss as the climate emergency worsens

Committee vacancies

[Membership and Professional Affairs Committee members](#)

Members of the RSB and our Member Organisations are invited to apply for up to three vacant positions, and we are looking for a range of expertise including: member retention strategies, member engagement strategies, professional development expertise including technical pathways, online training and blended learning models, regional activity and business development expertise. We would particularly welcome members who work, or have expertise, in supporting technical professionals, are currently involved in the work of our branches and members in the early stages of their career or returning to work after a period of leave. To apply please submit your CV and a short (1 page) cover letter by the deadline.

Closes: 12 February 2020

Opportunities

[British Biology Olympiad 2020](#)

The [British Biology Olympiad 2020](#) (31 January - 7 February) for post-16 students is now open for registration. The competition challenges and motivates students with an interest in biology, providing them with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. High scoring students will receive certificates and be invited to an awards ceremony in London. Please contact [Raghav Selvam](#) with any enquiries.

Closes: 24 January 2020

[Speak Up for Food Security 2020: Apply now!](#)

Closes: 26 January 2020

[Call for nominations for the Queen's New Year Honours 2021](#)

Closes: 6 February 2020

[Helping farmers to work more efficiently: apply for funding](#)

Closes: 26 February 2020

Biology Challenge 2020

The [Biology Challenge 2020](#) (10 - 31 March) for students aged 13 - 15 is now open for registration. The competition stimulates students' curiosity for the natural world and encourages them to take an interest in biology outside of school. High scoring students will receive certificates and be invited to an awards ceremony in London. Please contact [Raghav Selvam](#) with any enquiries

Closes: 28 February 2020

RSB Big Biology Day grant scheme 2020

The Royal Society of Biology's Big Biology Day grant scheme 2020 is now open for applications. The grant is an opportunity to share your passion for biology and the natural world, regardless of scientific background. Engage the general public with an array of hands-on activities, crafts and displays. During our anniversary year, and on through to the end of 2020, we are offering grants of up to £500 each for you to run your own Big Biology Day in your local area.

Closes: 28 February 2020

£500 student & early-career member travel grants

Student and early-career members of the Royal Society of Biology can now apply for a travel grant of £500 to support future overseas travel in connection with biological study, teaching or research.

Closes: 1 March 2020

Consultations

Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing

The WHO Expert Advisory Committee on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing was set up to examine the scientific, ethical, social and legal challenges associated with human genome editing (both somatic and germ cell). The Committee is in the process of developing [a governance framework](#). In an effort to understand and include a wider set of views, the Committee is consulting on features that should be included in this framework, and governance-related issues. The RSB is considering submitting a response to this consultation and is seeking expert contributions. For the consultation questionnaire and if you would like to know more about how to contribute, please contact consultation@rsb.org.uk. Internal deadline for contributions is Tuesday 28 January 2020.

Closes: 7 February 2020

Guidance for research organisations on how to implement the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

Closes: 24 February 2020

Events

[Celebrating sport and exercise science education to promote lifelong health and the Welsh economy](#)

28 January 2020

National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff

[Athena Forum Prizes and Awards workshop](#)

31 March 2020

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

And finally...

[How a Fish Steals Its Ability to Glow](#)

Many organisms have evolved bioluminescence, but the golden sweeper's lights comes from the glowing shrimp in its diet.

The Biologist

The latest issue of *The Biologist* explores potential uses of [gene drive technology in agriculture and conservation](#) and looks ahead to the [International Year of Plant Health in 2020](#). The issue also looks at what it's like to have a [hidden disability in the biosciences](#) and Professor Jonathan Hodgkin discusses [how *C. elegans* became one of the most powerful model organisms in bioscience](#).

Bioethics special issue

The [latest issue](#) of Emerging Topics in Life Science (ETLS) focuses on the theme 'perspectives in bioethics'. It includes the latest views on consumer genetic testing kits; animal experimentation, preimplantation gene editing, 'robo-bees' and other emerging ethical issues in bioscience. ETLS is co-owned by the Royal Society of Biology and the Biochemical Society. To receive content alerts sign up [here](#).

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