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

17 May 2017

News

Royal Society of Biology news

**RSB Member Organisations come together to discuss equality and diversity in biosciences**
Senior staff members from many of our Membership Organisations (MOs) came together at this year’s twilight event to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) across scientific communities.

**Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow announced as next RSB President**
Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow is to succeed Professor Dame Jean Thomas as President of the Society from May 2018.

Royal Society of Biology blog posts

**Raising awareness for diversity and inclusion across membership organisations**
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are three vital priorities that all workplaces should strive to achieve for their workforce, and those working in the biosciences are no exception.

Top story

**How will this election impact upon science and engineering?**
CaSE Director Dr Sarah Main on the importance this election holds for the future of UK science and engineering.
Health and biomedicine

Refocusing Public Health England
PHE has created a new Health Improvement directorate which will be led by John Newton (previous Chief Knowledge Officer)

Largest UK resource of human stem cells created
Scientists have created the UK’s largest resource of human stem cells from healthy people.

Ebola vaccine could get first real-world test in emerging outbreak
The Democratic Republic of Congo has reported nine suspected cases of infection in recent weeks.

Beauty and the business
As with other research questions for the Council’s [Nuffield Council on Bioethics] current project on cosmetic procedures, we’ve [the Council] come up against a roadblock in trying to find out the financial value of the cosmetic procedures industry: a lack of data.

Open innovation in health: A guide to transforming healthcare through collaboration
What role can open innovation play in addressing health challenges around the world?

UK faces biomedical ‘brain drain’, study warns
One in three scholars in field ‘deeply concerned’ about future research career prospects.

Food and drink

New strains of staple crops serve up essential vitamins
More nutritious versions of staple crops could increase daily vitamin and mineral intake for millions of people with poor diets, helping to overcome undernourishment that can cause blindness, brittle bones, feeble muscles and brain damage.

Science for Defra: For good food and farming policy in the UK, connections are key
Forestry

Modernising forestry
Forestry and Land Management Bill introduced to parliament. The Scottish Parliament will consider forestry legislation for the first time in its history after the introduction of a Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill.

Brazil's archaeologists join fight to preserve country's ancient lands
Brazil's archaeologists have lined up alongside conservationists and indigenous rights campaigners to protest against government proposals that they see as a threat to pre-colonial cultural heritage as well as forests, native communities and biodiversity.

Animal research

Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses Bill introduced
Environment Secretary outlines new animal welfare measures. A wide-ranging package of measures designed to improve animal welfare has been announced, alongside the introduction of a bill to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses.

Environment and ecology

US Glacier national park is losing its glaciers with just 26 of 150 left
Warming climate makes it ‘inevitable’ that contiguous US will lose all of its glaciers within decades, according to scientists

Where have all the insects gone?

Garden centres selling 'bee-friendly' plants laced with pesticides that harm them, study finds
Just two of the 29 plants tested contained no insecticide or fungicide.

Climate and energy

How China is planning ahead for life after coal
China’s remarkable growth over the past three decades has elevated it to global superpower status. But its economic miracle has also attracted attention for the wrong reasons: the country is now the world’s largest energy consumer, oil importer, and CO₂ emitter.
Water and air

Grey plaque scheme highlights NO2 pollution in London
London’s Choking initiative aims to draw attention to areas where nitrogen dioxide pollution threatens public health.

Cities need 'hedges as well as trees' for environment

Waste

38 million pieces of plastic waste found on uninhabited South Pacific island
Henderson Island, part of the Pitcairn group, is covered by 18 tonnes of plastic – the highest density of anthropogenic debris recorded anywhere in the world.

Britons throw away 1.4m edible bananas each day, figures show
Government study says £80m worth is discarded every year – sometimes simply because of a minor bruise or black mark.

Government and parliament

Have three retiring MPs cleared the way for new life sciences champions?
Two weeks ago, we [UK BioIndustry Association] had a look at who’s running and who’s stepping down in the general election. A lot of things can happen in two weeks in the run-up to an election and today [11 May] we have a further look at a few candidates of interest of the life sciences sector who we might see in Westminster following the election on June 8.

Exiting the EU

Brexit ‘will weaken European research’
European research and innovation will suffer when the UK leaves the EU, representatives of research organisations have warned.

‘Major risk’ to European research from UK’s EU budget delay
British universities would be ‘most affected’ by failure to increase Horizon 2020 funding, MEP warns.
European science ‘will be damaged by Brexit’
UK exit from EU research would boost success rates for other countries – but at cost of quality, experts warn.

The post-Brexit lessons from Switzerland for UK HE and science
Switzerland’s recent changing relationship with the EU research and mobility programmes gives the UK some interesting lessons about how our own programmes might interact with the EU post-Brexit.

Brexit ‘could turn UK into backwater for top research’
The UK risks becoming a “backwater” for scientific research unless the world’s “brightest and best” are made welcome after Brexit, top scientists warned today [10 May].

Carrots and sticks: EU 27 send mixed signals to UK scientists
Europe’s research organisations are willing to consider bilateral research deals with the UK, but at the same time are also open to attracting British talent, a conference has heard.

Diversity in Science Post Brexit

Research funding and higher education policy

General election 2017: tuition fees under the spotlight
The imminent publication of party manifestos has thrust how students should pay for their higher education into the spotlight.

Getting the sector’s voice heard: The Higher Education and Research Act
For the past year, talk of HERB has been aplenty in the AMRC office. No, we haven’t suddenly gained a burning interest in gardening or cookery; we’ve been working on the development of the Higher Education and Research Bill, now Act.

National academies want election pledges on R&D
Ahead of the general election, the UK’s four leading national academics have urged the next government to set a spending target of 3 per cent GDP on R&D.

University rankings are fake news. How do we fix them?
Open access and publication policy

**Why has submitting a manuscript to a journal become so difficult? A call to simplify an overly complicated process**
It is widely acknowledged that submitting a paper to a journal is a fraught activity for authors.

**Science publishers try new tack to combat unauthorized paper sharing**
Rise in copyright breaches prompts industry to discuss ways to allow ‘fair sharing’ of articles.

**Six questions about preprints**
2017 is shaping up to be the year that preprints in biomedical sciences go mainstream.

**Peer review: should we let the robots take over?**
Technologist argues that artificial intelligence could make publishing decisions in milliseconds.

Business and industry

**A focus on the UK’s historic strengths will underpin future growth**
Steven Gillard, Head of Government Affairs at Boeing UK & Ireland, on investing in STEM in order for the UK to remain competitive.

Equality and diversity

**Raising Dauntless Daughters**

Ethics

**The secret war against counterfeit science**
China has a lucrative market for fake research reagents. Some scientists are fighting back.
Science for Defra: What do policymakers want from scientists?
“Systems thinking, interdisciplinary working, uncertainty...that's our life!” was how Claire Moriarty, Permanent Secretary at Defra, summarised the complex context to using science in policymaking during a two day conference on the subject hosted by the Royal Society

Opportunities

Head of Education Policy Maternity Cover
This is an exciting opportunity to join the small and dynamic team at the Royal Society of Biology and make a large impact as the head of education policy. In this extensive role the head of education policy is responsible for leading on and delivering the Society's education policy initiatives from primary through to tertiary education across the UK. They also engage with the Societies other activities, ranging from public engagement and events to professional development and training.
Closes at 9:00 on 22 May 2017

Events

Policy Lunchbox: The Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing
24 May 2017, London
Join us for Policy Lunchbox with Katie Beckett from the Access and Benefit Sharing team at Regulatory Delivery, who will be talking about the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing, why is it relevant and how to comply.

Bioscientists Guide to Research Integrity
We are currently inviting expressions of interest – Date TBC, London
This half-day workshop will provide an introduction to research integrity and responsible research conduct in the context of the Biosciences'. This workshop is suitable for researchers at all stages of their career - from PhD students to senior Professors.
And finally...

**Armyworms: The hungry caterpillar threatening a global food crisis**
A plague of armyworms is marching across Africa, devastating crops, and claiming new territory at an alarming rate.

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