

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

18 July 2019

### News

#### Royal Society of Biology news

##### [RSB Education and Science Policy \(ESP\) Committee appoints new members](#)

We would like to congratulate six new ESP Committee members who have been appointed following our recent recruitment campaign. The ESP Committee helps the Royal Society of Biology to develop strategies and priorities across our science and education policy activity.

#### Health and biomedicine

##### ['Amazing' gene-silencing drugs reach NHS](#)

##### [HPV vaccine could prevent over 100,000 cancers](#)

Estimates suggest that the HPV vaccine programme could prevent over 64,000 cervical cancers and nearly 50,000 non-cervical cancers by 2058.

##### [Government set to offer guidance on daily recommended hours of sleep, say reports](#)

Leaked green paper reportedly calls for effort to promote healthy sleep habits

##### [Scottish girl is world's youngest deep brain stimulation patient](#)

Two-year-old has had brain surgery to treat spasms, raising hopes for other children

##### [Ketamine-like drug for depression could get UK licence within the year](#)

Esketamine could initially become available through private clinics but potential side effects raise concerns

#### Food and drink

##### [Fruit juices and sugary drinks linked to increased cancer risk, large study finds](#)

Revelation comes as Boris Johnson vows to halt so-called 'sin taxes' on sugary drinks, tobacco and alcohol

## [Seafood industry seeks answers on post-Brexit trade](#)

## [Grasshoppers and silkworms have antioxidant capacity similar to fresh orange juice, says study](#)

## [Avocado, coffee and citrus fruits 'threaten global food security'](#)

Monocultures of crops take up more land than ever and provide little nutrition for pollinators

## Agriculture and fisheries

## [Meat infected by African swine fever found in UK for first time](#)

Highly contagious virus can live for months in processed meat and would have 'devastating implications' if passed to live pigs

## [Salmon farms in UK 'at serious risk' after closures due to environmental damage](#)

Mowi to 'relocate' highly contentious fish farm from entrance to previously prosperous trout fishing loch

## [Brexit: Farmers could be paid to protect the environment](#)

## [17,000 more fish released into Lincolnshire's River Witham](#)

Environment Agency teams have restocked a total of 91,000 so far to help the river recover after a devastating pollution last year

## Environment and ecology

## [Natural England to declare a new London National Nature Reserve](#)

South London Downs will be officially declared later this month.

## Water and air

## [Battle for clean air is sending our gardens to new heights](#)

More living walls are being created in cities to tackle pollution, but keeping them alive can be a major challenge

## [Environment Agency tells water companies to clean up their act and protect the environment from pollution](#)

Water company efforts to protect the environment were described as 'simply unacceptable' in an Environment Agency (EA) report published today (10 July) with only 1 of the major water and sewage companies in England performing at the level expected.

## [Billions of air pollution particles found in hearts of city dwellers](#)

Exclusive: Study shows associated damage to critical pumping muscles, even in children

## [Government targets particulate matter and microplastic pollution from cars](#)

UK Government calls for action to tackle particulate matter released from tyres and brakes.

## Climate and energy

### [UK aid's biggest ever single direct commitment to tackle climate change in Africa](#)

International Development Secretary announces package to help Africa deal with climate change and move away from fossil fuels during a two day visit to Kenya.

### [Climate change: Used cooking oil imports may boost deforestation](#)

### [Climate activists turn to lawsuits to force action on global warming](#)

Citizens and organizations have filed more than 1,300 cases worldwide since 1990.

### [The stark truth about UK government climate action: there is no one in charge](#)

### [Government will miss climate change targets because of 'failing policy' on energy efficiency, MPs warn](#)

Commons committee warns that 'decisive and far-reaching government action' is needed to reverse funding cuts and 'lack of political will'

### [The five: genetic fixes for the climate crisis](#)

Scientists are discovering innovative ways to help the natural world adapt to environmental change

## Government and Parliament

### [How the Council for Science and Technology makes a difference](#)

An overview of the work of the Council for Science and Technology.

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [New OfS analysis shows continuing upward trend in award of top degrees](#)

The Office for Students has updated its analysis on degree classifications, and finds that 13.9 percentage points of first class degrees awarded are unexplained.

### [Research England investment of £221m attracts £500m for 11 state-of-the-art research facilities](#)

### [Measure of the metrics](#)

With a review of the Teaching Excellence Framework about to be published, here is what must change if the TEF is to last.

## Schools education policy

### [More primary school pupils achieve 'expected standard' in Sats exams amid criticism of testing regime](#)

'Test-driven primary assessment is damaging children's mental health,' union says

### [Children to have greater opportunity to access 60 minutes of physical activity every day](#)

School Sport and Activity Action Plan will help set children up to lead healthy lives

## [“Not enough money going into the education system in Wales” – Lynne Neagle AM](#)

The National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee is today calling on the Welsh Government to carry out an urgent review of school funding.

## [National mental health programme between schools and NHS](#)

Education Secretary Damian Hinds sets out next steps in bringing together services for young people in need of mental health support

## **Business and industry**

### [New tech teams to protect dolphins and create next generation of super strong aluminium](#)

New pioneering technologies set to be developed in the UK as part of 4 new partnerships between businesses and universities.

## **Diversity and inclusion**

### [The lawyer who wants more academics to ‘come out’ as working class](#)

The founder of the Association of Working Class Academics is fighting for class to be recognised in equality law as well as race and gender

## **Digital technologies**

### [Mobile app 'finds anti-cancer molecules in food'](#)

### [Amazon Alexa offering NHS health advice](#)

### [From bench to bedside: AI for health and care](#)

## **International news**

### [Blind patients have vision partially restored after new brain implant](#)

‘It is a real message of hope – I feel within my lifetime we can restore functional sight to the blind’, expert says of successful study

### [Koala and kangaroo culling considered as numbers become 'overabundant'](#)

Species' expansion threatens South Australia's habitat and biodiversity, report says

### [France to abolish state funding for homeopathic medicines, saying they are no better than 'placebo'](#)

Current French social security reimburses up to 30 per cent of the cost of a homeopathic remedy and they can be prescribed by doctors despite most being almost entirely water

### [Transplant recipients may soon have a test to protect against organ rejection](#)

To help prevent organ rejection, transplant recipients could receive drug cocktails personalised to their own immune systems if a new test, which has passed early trials,

is successful. And new methods for scrubbing animal tissue could enable humans to benefit from other species' organs in the future.

## Opinion

### [Academic progression rules are holding international students back](#)

The UK can be proud to have some of the best higher education establishments in the world and of its long term track record in welcoming foreign students. Many of these students have gone on to become leaders in the political, military, scientific, investment and business spheres around the world.

### [Would a cap and trade mechanism control student numbers?](#)

Iain Mansfield puts forward a cap and trade system for limiting student numbers in higher education, as an alternative to either a DDD threshold or individual caps once rumoured to be in the Augar review.

### [Lecturers aren't to blame for university grade inflation – the government is](#)

The soaring number of first-class degrees is a direct result of our marketised university system

### [Better policymaking needs democracy](#)

Who is education policy for? Since the publication of the Augar review this seems to have become more of a contested question.

### [University sector must tackle air travel emissions](#)

### [Racism in UK universities is blocking BAME academics from the top](#)

Universities must be upfront about institutional racism to become fairer places for black, Asian and minority ethnic staff

## People

### [Jacky Pallas obituary](#)

### [New Defra Chief Scientist appointed](#)

Professor Gideon Henderson has been appointed the new Defra CSA

### [FSA appoints new Chief Executive](#)

Emily Miles will be the new CEO at the Food Standards Agency.

## Opportunities

### [LASA 2019 call for 3Rs speakers](#)

The LASA 3Rs section conveners are inviting submissions for spoken presentations on any aspect of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) to be given at the 2019 LASA annual conference, which will be held in Birmingham during the 3Rs session on Wednesday 27 November 2019. Anyone who wishes to contribute, should submit a title and abstract using the submission form available on the [LASA website](#).

**Closes: 31 July 2019**

### **[The Nancy Rothwell Award 2019](#)**

The Nancy Rothwell Award 2019 specimen drawing competition for 7 – 18 year olds is now open for submissions. Prizes include an experience day at the [Royal Veterinary College](#) for students, and their school can also win £100. Visit the Royal Society of Biology [website](#) for more information.

**Closes: 30 July 2019**

### **RSB Accreditation Officer**

The Accreditation Officer will join a small dedicated team, managed by the Head of Accreditation. The successful candidate will help to ensure that the objectives in the RSB three-year business plan are met, with an emphasis on facilitating accreditation applications, including attending site visits as a Society representative and note-taker. This role will require a reasonable amount of UK travel, some international travel, and nights away from home. To apply, create a [mySociety](#) account with a CV (2 page max) and covering letter (1 page max) outlining your suitability for the role.

**Closes: 9 August 2019**

### **RSB Policy Internships**

The RSB has two internship positions available for current PhD students who are funded by [AHRC](#), [BBSRC](#), [EPSRC](#), [ESRC](#), [MRC](#), and [NERC](#). Successful applicants will spend three months working at the RSB in Central London in 2020. Start and end dates can be negotiated as appropriate.

**Closes: 12 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 is looking for local volunteers to help run its hands-on science activities at [Lambeth Country Show](#) Brockwell Park, London on **20th - 21st July 2019**; [Ipswich Maritime Festival](#) Ipswich Waterfront, Ipswich, Suffolk on **17th - 18th August 2019**; [Abergavenny Food Festival 2019](#) at Abergavenny, Wales, on **21st - 22nd September 2019**. If you live nearby and are interested in volunteering to help the RSB outreach team deliver hands-on science activities please email Dr Amanda Hardy via [outreach@rsb.org.uk](mailto:outreach@rsb.org.uk)

## Consultations

### **[Safeguarding the environment in British Overseas Territories: call for evidence](#)**

**Closes: 19 July 2019**

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

**Closes: 20 August 2019**

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

**Closes: 22 August 2019**

[Adding folic acid to flour](#)  
Closes: 9 September 2019

[Improving higher technical education](#)  
Closes: 29 September 2019

## Events

[EDIS Symposium 2019 - Inclusive Research and Experimental Design](#)  
9 September 2019  
The Francis Crick Institute, London

[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)

[Quantitative Methods in Gene Regulation V](#)  
9 - 10 December 2019  
Institute of Physics, London

## And finally...

[Goats get emotional? Humans shouldn't be surprised – all mammals are amazing](#)

Research showing goats can communicate emotion by bleating should help us build empathy with our fellow animals

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