

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

18 October 2019

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[Royal Society of Biology response to the Nuffield Council on Bioethics call for evidence on 'Genome Editing and Farmed Animals'](#)

The RSB response to this inquiry presents the Society's view on the potential future impact of genome editing on farmed animal breeding, the opportunities for sustainable development, the socio-economic, environmental and policy challenges associated with uses of the technology and important aspects for ethical consideration.

[Valuing our Life Support Systems 2019 – report](#)

The Natural Capital Initiative is a partnership of the Royal Society of Biology, British Ecological Society, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and the James Hutton Institute. The Natural Capital Initiative summit [report](#) is out now. The Natural Capital Initiative's 10th anniversary summit brought together over 180 delegates from across science, policy, NGOs, businesses and local communities to discuss innovative solutions that enhance the environment and strengthen society.

[RSB celebrates outstanding competition and award winners at this year's Annual Awards Ceremony](#)

The Royal Society of Biology held its Annual Awards Ceremony to celebrate RSB competition and award winners, newly recognised Registered Scientists and Registered Science Technicians, and to present the President's Medal.

Health and biomedicine

[Scurvy: is it really making a comeback in the UK?](#)

[Obesity: Ban snacking on public transport, top doctor says](#)

[New drug available on the NHS could slow down ovarian cancer](#)

'Many people with advanced ovarian cancer experience recurrent disease which

requires multiple rounds of chemotherapy,' says director of the Nice centre for health technology evaluation

[UK aid backs private sector to fight malaria](#)

New £100 million private sector funding to tackle malaria will be doubled by UK aid, to help stop six million cases of malaria and save 75,000 lives.

[How the way you walk could be used to identify some types of dementia](#)

Food and drink

[Raw milk: the benefits are unclear but the dangers are real](#)

[UK aid partners with Gates Foundation to tackle global food insecurity](#)

New funding to allow scientists to research cutting-edge technology to protect crops and produce “super crops” that will be more efficient and withstand the impacts of climate change.

[Food labels too complicated for most shoppers to understand – new research](#)

[New Academy of Nutrition Sciences launched](#)

The Association for Nutrition (AfN), British Dietetic Association (BDA), British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) and Nutrition Society (NS) have launched the Academy of Nutrition Sciences (ANS), a new charitable organisation which aims to provide a powerful and unified voice to promote evidence-based nutrition science. Other organisations from the UK and further afield, who share the Academy’s ambition, principles and values, will be welcome to join in future. Academy membership is open to organisations, not individuals.

Agriculture and fisheries

[Eight in 10 farmers benefit from working with government pollution advice service](#)

A network of 20,000 farms are taking action to drive down water pollution and protect the environment

[New report shows pilot scheme farmers boost environment outcomes](#)

Farmers and land managers in a “Payment by Results” pilot are more motivated to succeed, delivering “exceptional results” for the environment

[Favourable weather helps farming recover.](#)

A National Statistics Publication for Scotland.

[Cows fed charcoal in Grantham to cut emissions](#)

Environment and ecology

[Badger culling may increase spread of tuberculosis, say researchers](#)

Culls cause badgers to roam further, potentially worsening risk of disease in cattle

[Badger behaviour inside the cull zone](#)

ZSL study shows survivors of culls cover 61% greater areas, potentially increasing risk of transmission to cattle.

[Natural 'bumblebee medicine' found in heather](#)

Climate and energy

[Hundreds of temperature records broken over summer](#)

[UK hatches plan to build world's first fusion power plant](#)

Nuclear scientists are designing an ambitious prototype facility that could demonstrate commercial energy production by 2040.

[Renewable electricity overtakes fossil fuels in UK for first time](#)

New offshore windfarms opening in third quarter mark milestone towards zero carbon

[Rice growing produces tonnes of excess straw – can we turn it into 'bioenergy'?](#)

[Climate change is disrupting our critical progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[UN Development Goals: How does climate change jeopardise the chances of a sustainable future?](#)

Waste

[War on plastic waste faces setback as cost of recycled material soars](#)

Europe's manufacturers face \$250m-a-year hit as rising demand drives up price

[Microplastics: Seeking the 'plastic score' of the food on our plates](#)

[Action on plastics](#)

[Fossil fuel industry sees the future in hard-to-recycle plastic](#)

[NHS to cut single-use plastics in canteens and catering](#)

The plan to reduce single-use plastics comes as part of a drive from the health service to cut waste and help the environment.

Research funding and higher education policy

[New UKRI brand supports vision and ambition as a world-class funder](#)

[Grade inflation fears prompt new voluntary code for UK degrees](#)

Students need 'exceptional' skills and knowledge to achieve firsts, says Universities UK

[Collaboration can support doctoral researchers](#)

Undertaking a PhD or a sustained piece of research can be a frustrating, arduous and isolating process.

[Big increase in UK research funding may bring major system revamp](#)

Green Paper under consideration to explore nature and scope of 'mission' approach, while funding increases under discussion could range to the 'eye-popping'

Diversity and inclusion

[Supporting disabled students to succeed](#)

Following the launch of a campaign to recruit members for the Disabled Students' Commission, Chris Millward explains the background to the new body, what it will do, and why it is needed.

[How far have we come with LGBT welfare in higher education and employment?](#)

A new report indicates that only 38% of LGBT people at university and 42% in the workplace say their sexuality is public knowledge – compared with 93% and 80% of their non-LGBT counterparts.

Ethics

[Geneticists retract study suggesting first CRISPR babies might die early](#)

Researchers rapidly corrected finding through discussions on social media and preprints.

[Work of renowned UK psychologist Hans Eysenck ruled 'unsafe'](#)

Eysenck's 'cancer-prone' personality theory had come under criticism for decades

Outreach and engagement

[Invisible barriers keep many academics from the media](#)

A recent article on Wonkhe asked why there aren't more academic experts in the media. The answer, coming out of interviews with thirty "media active" academics, focus on institution support that could be offered by press offices, as well as the need for a change in mindset about media engagement. However, there are far more invisible barriers which stand in the way of early and mid-career academics, which will take far more than new initiatives to overcome.

Digital technologies

[Why deep-learning AIs are so easy to fool](#)

Artificial-intelligence researchers are trying to fix the flaws of neural networks.

[Robotic inspectors developed to fix wind farms](#)

[Multi-million funding boost for health tech innovators developing the next generation of cutting-edge technologies](#)

[£13 million in bid to boost digital skills](#)

£13 million is being made available to boost the number of skilled graduates in artificial intelligence and data science technologies over the next three years.

International news

[Two-thirds of bird species in North America could vanish in climate crisis](#)

Continent could lose 389 of 604 species studied to threats from rising temperatures, higher seas, heavy rains and urbanization

[Artificial womb: Dutch researchers given €2.9m to develop prototype](#)

Model from Eindhoven University will surround baby with fluid and deliver oxygen and nutrients via umbilical cord

[Genome-edited bull passes hornless gene to calves](#)

[How a new tuberculosis drug could stop one of the world's deadliest diseases](#)

[Zika known for abnormal small heads 'found in Africa'](#)

['The smell will knock you off your feet': mass mussel die-offs baffle scientists](#)

As the backbone of the river ecosystem because they control silt levels and filter water, mussels are facing a mysterious affliction

Opinion

[No-deal Brexit would leave science dead for years, say Nobel prizewinners](#)

Top scientists accuse Boris Johnson of sacrificing the UK's research reputation – and billions of pounds in EU grants

[Scientists 'must be allowed to cry' about environmental crisis](#)

Researchers call for end to 'pervasive illusion that scientists must be dispassionate observers', and better emotional support

People

[UKRI appoints Mental Health Networks Impact and Engagement Coordinator](#)

Opportunities

Education Policy Officer (0.4 FTE)

The Royal Society of Biology is seeking a part time education policy officer to support the development of a framework for 5 - 19 biology, and drive forward the Society's education policy work to support the learning of teaching of the biosciences in schools. This role focuses on primary and secondary education, and would suit candidates with a science undergraduate degree (preferably in the biosciences) and experience of teaching or UK science curricula. For more information and to apply, visit [mySociety](#).

Closes: 20 October 2019

MRC / AMS Policy Internship Scheme

The Medical Research Council and the Academy of Medical Sciences' are pleased to open applications to their [policy internship scheme](#). Students will receive first-hand experience of medical science policy and have the opportunity to build valuable relationships with key stakeholders across the sector. The scheme is open to all MRC-funded PhD students in their third or fourth year of study, and successful interns will undertake a 12-week placement at the Academy's offices in London.

Closes: 21 October 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 [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

RSB Big Biology Day Grant 2019

Are you interested in hosting a one-day science outreach festival to share your passion for biology and the natural world? Apply for the Royal Society of Biology's [Big Biology Day Grant 2019](#) and get up to £500 to host your own Big Biology Day.

Closes: 1 November 2019

RSB Outreach and Engagement grant scheme 2020

If you have an idea for an outreach and engagement event or activity and are looking for funding to make it happen in 2020. Apply now to the Royal Society of Biology's [Outreach and Engagement grant scheme online](#) and submit your application for a grant of up to £500.

Closes: 1 November 2019

Consultations

Developing a national food strategy

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: 25 October 2019

Highly Protected Marine Areas review

Closes: 31 October 2019

Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity

HM Treasury launches a call for evidence for an independent global review, led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, to assess the economic value of biodiversity and identify actions that will simultaneously enhance biodiversity and deliver economic prosperity. 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: 6 November 2019

Events

[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

[Athena Forum Prizes and Awards workshop](#)

6 November 2019

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

[STEMM-CHANGE conference](#)

14 November 2019

Royal Society of Chemistry, London

[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...

[The epic history of the humble goldfish](#)

In a fairy-tale transformation engineered by man, the dull, grey carp was bred to a metallic sheen more than a millennium ago.

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