

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

20 June 2019

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB responds to Professor Adrian Smith's call for evidence on future frameworks for international collaboration on research and innovation](#)

The RSB response advises on the opportunities and support mechanisms that could arise with future funding frameworks in consideration of current challenges and UK priorities. Here we advocate the importance of funding to support the Government's objective to reach 2.4% of GDP invested in R&D by 2027, in addition to current funding schemes, association with EU programmes, and the provision of UK Aid. In our response, we also describe how future frameworks must support discovery research, and enable early career researchers to lead and collaborate internationally.

Health and biomedicine

[Largest world stock of animal-killing virus destroyed by UK lab](#)

[Listeria outbreak: Health secretary orders NHS food review after five deaths linked to hospital sandwiches](#)

'We need a radical new approach to the food that is served in our NHS,' says minister after death toll rises

[Better treatment for prostate cancer](#)

More accurate scans for advanced patients.

[Spending two hours a week in nature is linked to better health and well-being](#)

[Medical implants raise safety and cybersecurity challenges for policy makers](#)

Food and drink

[Adding folic acid to flour: public asked views](#)

Plans to add folic acid to flour in the UK could prevent up to 200 birth defects a year, Public Health Minister, Seema Kennedy, announced today.

[Making school food healthier](#)

More fruit and vegetables, less processed red meat and sugar on the menu.

Agriculture and fisheries

[UK accused of 'silently eroding' EU pesticide rules in Brexit laws](#)

Analysis finds changes such as removal of blanket ban on hormone-disrupting chemicals

[New sheep shed examines farming's impact on climate](#)

[Catch recording for under 10m fishing vessels starts this summer](#)

Changes to the planned introduction of catch recording for all English and Welsh under 10 metre fishing boats have been made following a public consultation.

[Small farms produce more food than statistics show](#)

Small farms sometimes get overlooked as a feasible solution for feeding a growing population, but researchers say they should be given greater support, with some producing more food than official statistics report.

Forestry

[Scotland plants 22 million trees to tackle climate crisis while England falls 7 million short of target](#)

England misses target by more than 3,000 hectares

[Horticulture industry urged to be vigilant for signs of tree pest](#)

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) caterpillars found on trees recently imported from the Netherlands.

[Tree Champion reappointed to continue tree planting push](#)

The Government's Tree Champion Sir William Worsley has been reappointed to continue his drive to accelerate tree planting rates.

Environment and ecology

['Frightening' number of plant extinctions found in global survey](#)

Study shows 571 species wiped out, and scientists say figure is likely to be big underestimate

Water and air

[Revealed: UK government failing to tackle rise of serious air pollutant](#)

Investigation reveals no plan is in place to tackle increase in levels of agricultural ammonia, a gas contributing to thousands of deaths in UK alone

Climate and energy

[Climate change: UK government to commit to 2050 target](#)

[UK bids for COP26 presidency in partnership with Italy](#)

Waste

[G20 agrees landmark international deal to tackle plastic waste polluting world's oceans](#)

Framework drawn up in Japan will require countries to reduce and prevent plastic waste and report on progress

[Plastics in the sea: Part one – the plastic problem](#)

[UK supermarkets sign government pledge to help halve food waste](#)

Leading firms and organisations back game-changing action following landmark symposium.

Government and Parliament

[Farming robots and eco-buildings the future as research kick-starts new innovations](#)

Three government backed projects are set to benefit from a share of £76 million to work on ground-breaking research through the modern Industrial Strategy.

Exiting the EU

[UK-based 'Eric' facilities plan to shift work overseas](#)

In a further blow to British research, two major European research infrastructure facilities hosted by the UK have made plans to move back-office functions to Italy and Norway in the event of a hard Brexit.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Universities urged to hire staff to investigate sexual harassment](#)

Report commissioned by Office for Students also calls for hate crimes to receive greater focus

[University students more anxious amid increased assignments and challenging courses, survey suggests](#)

Two in three undergraduates want their mental health issues shared with parents, report finds

[Short-sighted visa refusals are harming global research collaboration](#)

The Observer has highlighted the disturbing trend in visa refusals for academics, particularly those from Africa, and how this is impacting upon global collaboration.

[New fund to boost excellent research at 13 universities](#)

Funding announced today will boost the capacity and quality of research at 13 universities in topics ranging from recycling plastic to meeting the needs of an ageing society, and manufacturing to agri-robotics.

[The Erasmus bus is leaving soon, so let's start running](#)

Released today, Universities UK International's Gone international: Rising Aspirations report highlights the benefits of study, work and volunteer programmes for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Schools education policy

[Theresa May calls for mental health to be priority](#)

Open access and publication policy

[Research England awards £2.2m to project to improve and increase open access publishing](#)

[Societies welcome Plan S delay](#)

A one-year delay to the controversial open-access initiative Plan S has calmed some of the concerns held by learned societies in the UK.

Diversity and inclusion

[Gender and the 'impact' agenda: the costs of public engagement to female academics](#)

International news

[China announces hefty fines for unauthorized collection of DNA](#)

A new law formalizes restrictions on the collection and use of people's genetic data.

[Hundreds of dolphins have died along Gulf Coast since February, scientists say](#)

At least 279 animals have been stranded, triple the usual figure, and 98% have died, prompting investigation

[Ebola outbreak: Uganda confirms two more cases as DRC's epidemic spreads](#)

Neighbouring African countries warned to brace as second largest spate of disease on record grows

[Over £2.4m joint investment to combat pests and microbe pathogens of crops and livestock in Brazil](#)

BBSRC has recently invested in six projects to be funded through the Newton Fund to combat one of the biggest threats to food security - agricultural losses due to pests and pathogens that are resistant to current treatments.

[Whole-body PET scanner produces 3D images in seconds](#)

The modified scanner also requires less radioactive exposure, vastly broadening its applications.

[Bermuda land snail comes 'back from the dead' after disappearing 40 years ago](#)

Species thought to be extinct until man walks into office holding empty shell

Opinion

[As an academic, should I worry about my conference carbon footprint?](#)

A recent international conference was an opportunity to network, but I feel guilty about the waste and emissions

[Disciplinary identities and other barriers to advancing interdisciplinary working](#)

[Peer review is not just quality control, it is part of the social infrastructure of research](#)

[A vegan meat revolution is coming to global fast food chains – and it could help save the planet](#)

People

[The five: unsung female scientists](#)

The history of science has often seen women's work overlooked and their credit stolen

[Queen's Birthday Honours for NERC research community](#)

NERC extends its warmest congratulations to a number of researchers in the environmental science community who have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Opportunities

[RSB Outreach and Engagement Award 2019](#)

Are you a bioscience researcher involved in science communication? If you work in any sector of UK biosciences, apply for the Royal Society of Biology Outreach and Engagement Award 2019 and win up to £1500.

Closes: 28 June 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 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.

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

[Basildon Street Science](#), Basildon, Essex on **13th July 2019**, 10:00 – 16:00;

[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 our hands-on science activities please email Dr Amanda

Hardy via outreach@rsb.org.uk

Consultations

[Updating the UK marine strategy part one \(2019\)](#)

Closes: 20 June 2019

[BBSRC asks for community input on data intensive bioscience](#)

BBSRC is conducting a review of data-intensive bioscience research in 2019.

Closes: 1 July 2019

[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

Events

[Report Launch, Technicians: Vital front-line support for student wellbeing & mental health](#)

20 June 2019

Burlington House, London

A collaborative team from the Technician Commitment, Science Council, Royal Society of Biology, Institute of Physics, Royal Society of Chemistry, University of Liverpool and University of Nottingham recently undertook a national survey in order to shed light on the important roles technicians play in student mental health and well-

being. The resultant report offers an unprecedented insight into the ways in which technical staff in higher education support student mental health and well-being.

[Quantitative Methods in Gene Regulation V](#)

9 - 10 December 2019

Institute of Physics, London

And finally...

[Cuttlefish Arms Are Not So Different From Yours](#)

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