

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

21 June 2017

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB Members and Fellows feature in 2017 Birthday Honours list](#)

A number of Fellows and Members of the RSB have been recognised in the latest Birthday Honours announcement.

Health and biomedicine

[Action needed to prevent confusion over medicines](#)

The new report highlights the significant difficulties patients and some healthcare professionals face in using evidence from research to judge the benefits and harms of medicines, and calls for concerted action to improve the information patients receive.

[Review ties stewardship to sharp drop in resistant bacteria](#)

Antibiotic stewardship programs have reduced the incidence of infections and colonization with multidrug-resistant (MDR) gram-negative bacteria in hospital patients by more than half, and cut methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and *Clostridium difficile* incidence by a third, according to a new review and meta-analysis in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

[EU moves to restrict hormone-disrupting chemical found in plastics](#)

Green groups welcome 'historic' ruling recognising that bisphenol A (BPA), found in TVs, plastic water bottles and kettles, poses a threat to human health.

[Scientists create 'mutant bird flu' to prepare for possibility of deadly global pandemic](#)

'We need to know what the virus could do in nature, so we can be alert and aware if we start seeing these changes,' says professor.

Environment and ecology

[Science for Defra: How can we harness data and emerging technologies for the natural environment?](#)

How can data and emerging technologies transform the ways we assess and monitor changes in the natural environment?

[Rising Sea Levels](#)

Forestry

[Scientists fear new EU rules may 'hide' forest carbon loss](#)

Climate and energy

[Juncker rejects US climate deal re-negotiation](#)

Water and air

[Don't hold your breath...](#)

Air quality has been hitting the headlines recently with Defra forced to publish its draft Air Quality Plan earlier in May. But what is meant by 'air quality' and how is it affecting you?

[Air pollution plan 'unfair' on local authorities](#)

Animal research

[RSPCA endorses animal lab virtual tours](#)

A chance for the public to experience life inside an animal research facility has been backed, surprisingly, by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Government and Parliament

[From Cornwall to ZSL London for a day on how to engage with Parliament](#)

[ONS to stop giving ministers preferential access to official data](#)

The Office for National Statistics will no longer allow government ministers and officials to see data ahead of publication, after a string of suspicious market movements ahead of data releases was reported.

Exiting the EU

[How will Brexit affect Clinical Trials?](#)

[Leaving the European Union: UK Climate Change Policy](#)

This House of Lords Library briefing provides an overview of a selection of European legislation which relates to climate change, and outlines how it has been implemented in the UK.

[Brexit 'will enhance' UK wildlife laws - Gove](#)

Research funding and higher education policy

[Academics 'face decreasing job security'](#)

Job security is "no longer the norm" for higher education staff in Europe, a report for the European Commission has found.

[A 'made in Wales' approach to education regulation](#)

[The allocation of scientific grants should be a science](#)

His experiences on a panel reviewing Canadian grant allocation has convinced Jonathan Grant that the evidence base for current practice needs serious reinforcement.

Open access and publication policy

[Biologists debate how to license preprints](#)

Flood of online manuscripts generates confusion about terms for distribution and reuse.

[Use of preprints in BBSRC-funded research](#)

In line with the announcement by MRC, BBSRC wishes to remind researchers that preprints are acceptable for citation in research grant and fellowship applications.

[Ethics and open science in mix for researcher development rethink](#)

Changing academic environment prompts rethink of globally influential employment support guidelines.

Equality and diversity

[HEFCE urged to rethink 'unequal' REF panel](#)

The membership of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel for the next Research Excellence Framework is causing concern among staff responsible for equality and diversity in universities, although most are not prepared to speak openly.

Ethics

[New concerns raised over value of genome-wide disease studies](#)

Large analyses dredge up 'peripheral' genetic associations that offer little biological insight, researchers say.

Other news

[Machine learning can give us a clearer picture of research](#)

Artificial intelligence can already describe research. With the right data and expertise, it might evaluate it, say Jonathan Adams and his colleagues.

[Gained in translation: adding value to research to inform policy](#)

Within the social sciences, translating and sharing new knowledge is now common practice amongst many researchers and institutions across academia. From evidence briefings and summaries of literature to online blogs and presentations, a wide range of research evidence aims to engage policy and practitioner audiences so they can more easily access and use the evidence. Raj Patel questions whether it is adequate to simply communicate findings, and proposes a model for adding value to research in a way that is more likely to generate impact.

People

[Genome pioneer John Sulston enters elite club](#)

Opportunities

[Science policy officer](#)

Joint Biochemical Society & Royal Society of Biology vacancy.
Closes 30 June

Consultations

[Public survey and call for evidence on genome editing](#)

Genome editing may offer benefits to people at risk of passing on some medical conditions by allowing genetic variants that are associated with inherited illness or disease risk to be 'edited out'. The technique could also be used to target characteristics other than those associated with illness and health. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics would like to hear as wide a range of views as possible on ethical questions about these potential uses of genome editing and how far we, as a society, should go in altering fundamental aspects of human biology.
Closes 30 June

Nagoya Protocol

At the last international meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol decisions were adopted on digital sequence information on genetic resources (these can be found online here: [Decision XIII/16](#) and [Decision 2/14](#)). In these decisions Parties to the agreements agreed to consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention, and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol, at the next international meeting taking place in November 2018. Ahead of next year's meeting Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples, local communities, relevant organizations and stakeholders are invited to submit views and relevant information on any potential implications of the use of DSI on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol. Please contact policy@rsb.org.uk to have your say. Deadline for responses to RSB is 3 July.

Good practice in research commercialisation: Request for evidence

The HEFCE-universities Knowledge Exchange (KE) Framework Steering Group (Note 1) has asked the Association for University Research and Industry Links (AURIL), PraxisUnico and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) (Note 2) to help compile evidence about existing good practice in research commercialisation. This is focused on all forms of research and development partnering and contracting between universities and businesses and other enterprises.

Closes 4 September

And finally...

Multi-million dollar upgrade planned to secure 'failsafe' Arctic seed vault

Improvements aim to ensure the vault's role as an impregnable deep freeze for the world's most precious food seeds after a recent flooding by melting permafrost.

Royal Society of Biology

Science Policy Team

Charles Darwin House

12 Roger Street

London

WC1N 2JU

policy@rsb.org.uk

Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Royal Society of Biology.

© Royal Society of Biology 2017. Registered Charity Number: 277981
Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU