

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

22 February 2017

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[Initial findings from the post 16 biology survey](#)

The Royal Society of Biology (RSB) is working with its curriculum committee to consider what the future of biology education in schools might be. As part of this work we are gathering evidence of the impact of curriculum reforms, including via a survey of post-16 biology education. In England, 2016 was the final year in which students have completed the pre-reform A levels.

Health and biomedicine

[\[Nuffield Council on Bioethics\] responds to NAS-NAM report on human genome editing](#)

The US National Academies of Sciences (NAS) and National Academy of Medicine (NAM) have today released the new report Human Genome Editing: Science, Ethics, and Governance. The report provides an overview of current capabilities in the rapidly developing field of human genome editing technologies, their potential use in biomedical research and medicine, and the clinical, ethical, legal, and social implications of their use.

[Broad Institute wins bitter battle over CRISPR patents](#)

The US Patent and Trademark Office issues a verdict in legal tussle over rights to genome-editing technology.

[Why the CRISPR patent verdict isn't the end of the story](#)

From legal challenges to ongoing experimentation, the story of who owns the rights to CRISPR–Cas9 gene editing is still being written.

[Vitamin D 'proved to cut risk of colds and flu'](#)

Move would also save NHS money, argue authors of major study that shows vitamin D can reduce risk of respiratory infections.

Agriculture and fishery

[UK fishermen may not win waters back after Brexit, EU memo reveals](#)

Document obtained by the Guardian states existing quotas will remain despite promises made by leave campaigners.

Forestry

[Mapping rainforest chemistry from the air reveals 36 types of forest](#)

Chemical signatures of the Peruvian tree canopy reveal previously unrecognized biodiversity.

[Ash dieback outbreak has only just begun, says Kent environment chiefs](#)

Environment and ecology

[Ocean meadows scrub seawater of harmful bacteria](#)

Seagrasses keep waterborne pathogens in check, potentially benefiting people and coral reefs.

[Urban butterfly declines 69% compared to 45% drop in countryside](#)

Pesticides, paving and higher temperatures have put huge strain on butterflies in cities over past two decades, finds study.

Water and air

[European commission issues 'final warning' to UK over air pollution breaches](#)

UK is one of five countries persistently contravening legal nitrogen dioxide levels with pollution from factories and vehicles.

Animal research

[Animals for antibiotic research: Is it necessary?](#)

Dr Sam Willcocks is Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) investigating novel antimicrobials and virulence factors. Sam is also the lead for biological and pharmacological sciences within LSHTM's AMR Centre.

Government and parliament

[Responding to Select Committee Inquiries](#)

Martin Smith, a Specialist at the House of Commons Science & Technology Committee, explained the most effective ways of responding to Select Committee Inquiries at the February Policy Lunchbox, organised by the Biochemical Society, British Ecological Society, Royal Society of Biology, Society for Applied Microbiology, Society for Experimental Biology and Microbiology Society.

[New ministers for life sciences](#)

[Update] Setting out the new ministerial responsibilities for the life sciences sector.

[Williams seeks to bolster Welsh position in UKRI](#)

Wales' education secretary Kirsty Williams told Research Fortnight that the Welsh government's review of research activity and funding was commissioned to protect the national interest in the face of changes to UK research.

Exiting the EU

[UK agriculture – public goods post-Brexit](#)

The EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee questions experts on conservation and the rural economy about the implications of Brexit for public goods and agriculture.

[Oxford University may break with 700 years of tradition and open a foreign campus - after France offers Brexit sweetener](#)

Oxford University might break with 700 years of tradition by establishing its first foreign campus in response to Brexit, The Telegraph can disclose.

[UK science must work with the US, but it won't replace the EU](#)

The UK-US research relationship post-Brexit must work for both countries, says Darragh Murnane.

[UK scientists seek closer relationship with US after Brexit](#)

[Delay in hiring science advisers intensifies Brexit worries](#)

Policy experts want scientists to be at the table when government decides on environmental protection and membership of international collaborations.

Research funding and higher education policy

[The Teaching Excellence Framework for higher education \(TEF\)](#)

House of Commons Library report [15 February 2017]

[TEF 1, TEF 2 and a complex game of snakes and ladders](#)

Why does it look like more than 30 eligible English institutions are not entering TEF 2? And why did six eligible institutions actively opt out of TEF 1 – a competition that required them merely to continue existing?

[University governance in flux. The impact of external and internal pressures on the distribution of authority within British universities: a synoptic view](#)

Professor Michael Shattock from the UCL Institute of Education reviews changes in British university governance over the last century and analyses the extent to which these have been driven by internal or external factors.

[Fostering greater awareness of how universities operate can serve them well when their integrity comes under attack](#)

[We need slow science to sow the seeds of future prosperity](#)

It's tempting to invest in rapid development at the cost of slow and steady research – but good things come to those who wait.

Schools education policy

[Recruitment and retention of teachers](#)

House of Commons Education Committee report.

Open access and publication policy

[Research that languishes in journals represents an opportunity lost](#)

John Walley on how healthcare research must bring practical benefits, not just scholarly pride.

[Big and open data are prompting a reform of scientific governance](#)

Data-centric science is emerging in concert with calls for increased openness in research, says Sabina Leonelli.

Business and industry

[Industrial Strategy: The Role for Science & Innovation](#)

How can scientific breakthroughs be turned into commercial products? How can data be used effectively? What can social sciences bring to our innovation and growth? How can the new Industrial Strategy support these efforts?

Equality and diversity

[Holyrood Committee launches gender pay gap inquiry](#)

Could closing the gender pay gap boost the Scottish economy? This will be a key question for the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Fair Work and Jobs Committee as it launches its inquiry into the impact of equal pay.

[Research networks 'more important' for female scientists](#)

Study finds a stronger correlation for women between success and being central to a network.

[Women miss out on authorship opportunities early on](#)

Female first-year Ph.D. students in "bench" biology disciplines—such as molecular biology, cellular biology, and genetics—spend significantly more hours in lab than their male classmates do.

Ethics

[Gene therapy must keep pace with public trust](#)

Other news

[Sausages, evidence and policymaking: The role of universities in a post-truth world](#)

From Tony Blair's declaration that 'What counts is what works' in 1997, to David Cameron's vow to 'put evidence at the heart of what we do' in 2015, political commitments to use research in policymaking have been the norm in recent decades.

[French minister: politicians must foster dialogue with scholars](#)

Axelle Lemaire says democracies are 'suffering' because of 'broken links' between academics and policymakers.

[Do's and don'ts for scientists who want to shape policy](#)

Paul Cairney, a political scientist at the University of Stirling in the United Kingdom, has a message for those who want facts and research findings to guide policy.

[Putting Evidence to Work for Policymakers](#)

Although scientists often are urged to share their expertise with policymakers, the idea that evidence should drive policy is not always accepted, said physicist and policy adviser S. James Gates, Jr.

[Think tanks can transform into the standard-setters and arbiters of quality of 21st century policy analysis](#)

People

[Professor Eleanor Riley appointed to lead The Roslin Institute](#)

Professor Eleanor Riley has been appointed to head the prestigious The Roslin Institute at The University of Edinburgh, which receives strategic investment from BBSRC.

Opportunities

[Science Policy Officer](#)

Royal Society of Biology

Closes 28 February 2017

[Department for Education survey of ex-teachers](#)

If you have left teaching the state-funded sector in England, the Department for Education would like to hear from you. They have created a survey which will take roughly 5 minutes to complete which will help them improve their understanding of why teachers leave. Your responses will be treated anonymously.

Consultations

[Research integrity inquiry](#)

The Science and Technology Committee is undertaking an inquiry on the issues raised in the POSTnote, and following up on the 'Peer review in scientific publications' report from 2011.

Closes 10 March 2017

[Forestry and Woodland inquiry consultation](#)

The National Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee is launching an inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales.

Closes 7 April 2017

[Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework \(REF 2021\)](#)

The four UK funding bodies for higher education have published a joint consultation on the arrangements for research assessment in a second Research Excellence Framework.

Closes 17 March 2017

[\[Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy\] Building our Industrial Strategy](#)

This green paper sets out our [BEIS] vision for a modern industrial strategy and some early actions we have committed to take. It aims to start a genuinely open and collaborative conversation about the skills, research, infrastructure and the other things we need to get right to drive long term growth in productivity.

Closes 17 April 2017

Events

[Climate change: catastrophe, hoax or just lukewarm?](#)

6 March 2017, London

Special lecture by Professor Tim Palmer FRS. Views about climate change can be very polarised. For some, it spells inevitable catastrophe. For others it is a massive hoax.

[What next for gene therapy?](#)

21 March 2017, London

Gene therapy allows the replacement or modification of genes in the cells of a patient. The technique has the potential to treat the underlying cause of a range of diseases and, as research progresses, the applications are likely to grow. But what should the limits be? And how do we decide where treatment ends and enhancement begins?

[Disability awareness training](#)

12 May 2017, London

This is a highly interactive training workshop, aimed at staff, managers and HR professionals, which will teach the attendees to recognise visible and hidden disabilities and ensure the delegates feel more disability aware and confident

[Unconscious bias training](#)

12 May 2017, London

This half day awareness building course aims to educate staff and managers so that they can lead by example in the quest to change mind-sets and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Before the training we ask those attending to take the Implicit Association Test to understand more about how bias affects our decision making and spontaneous behaviours.

And finally...

[Hello, again, Dolly](#)

Twenty years ago the world met the first adult clone, a sheep called Dolly. Her legacy lives on.

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.

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Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU