

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

22 March 2017

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB responds to Stephen Metcalfe's science priorities for Brexit statement](#)

The Royal Society of Biology responded to the latest statement on science priorities for Brexit, by Stephen Metcalfe MP, chair of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

[Students and young scientists put MPs in the hot seat at this year's Voice of the Future](#)

Science minister Jo Johnson and a range of other political figures were quizzed by young scientists on topics as diverse as artificial intelligence, gene editing, research funding, STEM careers, post-truth politics and space exploration during the Society's Voice of the Future event yesterday.

Health and biomedicine

[First UK licence to create three-person baby granted by fertility regulator](#)

IVF technique uses DNA from three people to prevent genetic diseases being passed on, and could be offered by Newcastle clinic from this summer.

[Response to HFEA licence to Newcastle Fertility Centre](#)

In response to the announcement today [16 March] that a licence has been granted to Newcastle Fertility Centre to use the Pronuclear Transfer technique in treatment, Hugh Whittall Director of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics [commented].

Food and drink

[Haddock from UK waters removed from sustainable seafood list](#)

MCS takes some haddock fisheries off green list – but Scottish fishermen accuse it of 'dressing advocacy up as science'.

Water and air

[Minister questioned on ocean acidification](#)

The Science and Technology Committee holds its final evidence session on 'ocean acidification' with the Minister, Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Ian Boyd.

Environment and ecology

[Decline of bees threatens evolution of plants, study suggests](#)

Field mustard plants pollinated by bumblebees were taller and more scented than those pollinated by hoverflies.

[Glyphosate weedkiller, previously linked to cancer, judged safe by EU watchdog](#)

Chemical used in the best-selling Roundup herbicide is cleared for public use following an EU licensing battle due to potential health risks.

Climate and energy

[British scientists face a 'huge hit' if the US cuts climate change research](#)

Academics fear Donald Trump's environmental policy may put an end to key data from US agencies.

['Extreme and unusual' climate trends continue after record 2016](#)

Government and Parliament

[Sir Mark Walport gives evidence on UK Research and Innovation](#)

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee holds a one-off evidence session with Sir Mark Walport, Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Rebecca Endean, Director of Research and Innovation reform at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

[Parliament launches 'Parliament Explained' Podcast](#)

Parliament has launched a brand new podcast, 'Parliament Explained', presented by writer and comedian Meera Syal, and featuring Members and staff from both Houses.

Exiting the EU

[The future of environmental policy after Brexit – Summary report now available](#)

To uphold the proud tradition of evidence based policy in the UK is a challenge. And we will be stronger if we provide policy options, not only evidence; if we cooperate and if we speak out. This was the conclusion at the latest NCI meeting, held jointly with the UK Network of Environmental Economists, on the future of evidence-based environmental policy post-Brexit.

[Brexit-proof the UK economy with more R&D, say employers](#)

New CBI campaign says economy risks being left behind unless UK research budget rises to 3% of GDP from 1.7%.

Business and industry

[Building our Industrial Strategy: Investing in science, research and innovation](#)

In the Government's recently published Green Paper on building the UK's industrial strategy, they recognise the importance of investment in science, research and innovation and have committed to a number of strategies to boost the UK innovation economy.

Research funding and higher education policy

[No researchers should be submitted to the REF](#)

The Royal Society believes that assessment of research quality must focus on institutions if it is to create the right incentives, says Ottoline Leyser.

[A future vision for Research Excellence Framework and what it means to me](#)

An early career researcher's take on the Royal Society's response to the REF consultation.

[Here to stay: the politics behind TEF wonkery](#)

It was always going to be this way. As soon as Jo Johnson confirmed his wish to press ahead with a Teaching Excellence Framework, the precise definition, measurement, and evaluation of each of those terms – 'teaching', 'excellence', and even 'framework' – were always going to be picked apart again and again.

[Study highlights factors that will shape UKRI's success](#)

Providing small, flexible grants and engaging research users at an early stage should be integral to the future of UK Research and Innovation, according to a report funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

[Funders and universities must work together to build international partnerships](#)

With the UK government starting the formal process of leaving the European Union, together with the reforms currently being debated as part of the Higher Education and Research Bill and the creation of UK Research and Innovation, science and research funding is going through a period of considerable change. If we work closely with each other and our counterparts overseas, this period of change may present opportunities as well as risks.

[Research funding 'more important than ever', report says](#)

A report for the European Commission has concluded that ongoing public funding of research and innovation activity will be important for driving future economic growth.

[The best translational researchers are basic researchers](#)

Life science is a big part of the UK government's industrial strategy, but neglecting basic research will drive top researchers abroad and threaten the flow of translatable discoveries, says Philippe Froguel.

People

[BEIS appoints think tank chief as director of industrial strategy](#)

Alexandra Jones set to leave Centre for Cities to take up new role.

Opportunities

[Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships](#)

Undergraduates - would you like to experience the exciting world of plant science research, tackle a key science challenge, and be paid for it? We've worked with plant scientists to create four excellent projects that address major plant health challenges identified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Students can now apply to work on these projects for 8-10 weeks this summer, with selected students receiving £300 per week.

Closes 30 April 2017

Consultations

[Brexit: farm animal welfare](#)

The EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee has launched a short inquiry into Brexit: farm animal welfare. The inquiry aims to elaborate upon issues identified in the Committee's ongoing inquiry into Brexit: agriculture.

Closes 8 April 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. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Comments related to the consultation are welcomed from RSB members- please contact policy@rsb.org.uk.

Closes 17 April 2017

[Improving air quality joint inquiry](#)

MP's from four select committees have combined forces to launch an unprecedented joint inquiry on air quality to scrutinise cross-government plans to tackle urban pollution hotspots. The Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Environmental Audit Committee, Health, and Transport Committees will hold four evidence sessions to consider mounting scientific evidence on the health and environmental impacts of outdoor air pollution.

Closes 12 May 2017

Events

[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...

Can science rob snakes of their deadliest weapon?

Even in a test tube, snake venom is terrifying.

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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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