

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

12 September 2019

News

Top stories

[UK science minister Jo Johnson resigns amid Brexit drama](#)

The brother of Prime Minister Boris Johnson cited conflict with family ties. He opposes a hard Brexit.

Royal Society of Biology blog

[Interning with the education policy team at the RSB](#)

Health and biomedicine

[Being vegetarian 'lowers heart disease risk but increases chance of stroke'](#)

Findings of major UK study have mixed results for those giving up eating meat

[New physical activity guidelines issued by UK Chief Medical Officers](#)

The guidelines emphasise the importance of building strength and balance for adults, and include recommendations for pregnant women, new mothers and disabled people.

[Calls for testosterone to be licensed in UK for postmenopausal women](#)

Hormone is critical treatment for those experiencing reduced libido in midlife, say experts

[Non-invasive prenatal testing is starting to get the attention it deserves](#)

[Stop return of measles by making MMR jab compulsory, say GPs](#)

Leading doctors say schools should not allow in children who have not had vaccination

Food and drink

[Grubs up: a third of Britons think we'll be eating insects by 2029](#)

Research finds belief that scoffing crickets or worm burgers will be commonplace

[A climate-friendly diet means rethinking the entire food system – researchers](#)

Shifting people to a new diet that is healthier for both the planet and for our bodies will require

radical changes in the way food is grown, sold and eaten, including possibly adding a tax on meat and dairy products.

[Fizzy and diet drinks: What we know and what we don't](#)

[Food allergen labelling changes become law](#)

New law introduced to extend labelling requirements for people with food allergies and intolerances

Agriculture and fisheries

[Global food producers 'failing to face up to role' in climate crisis](#)

Report urges meat, dairy and seafood companies to address impact of industry's deforestation, use of antibiotics and emissions

[Five ways UK farmers are tackling climate change](#)

[Multi-million pound boost for Scottish farmers](#)

Scottish farmers will receive an additional £51.4 million over the next two years, making sure funding is fairly allocated across the country.

[Benefits to farmers of global heating outweighed by losses, says report](#)

Value of European agriculture could fall 16% in 30 years due to drought and higher rainfall

Forestry

[Wales' Celtic rainforests in £6.5m restoration project](#)

Environment and ecology

[Public concern for nature reaches all-time high](#)

New national statistics show changes in how people use and relate to the natural environment.

[Public action and 'fundamental social change' needed to reverse biodiversity decline](#)

Getting the general public to monitor local plants and animals could help paint a clearer picture of the global biodiversity crisis, but fundamental social change is needed if we are to reverse the loss of nature critical to our survival, say biodiversity experts.

[Meat-eating plants making a comeback in England](#)

[New stronghold for endangered crayfish in Lincolnshire](#)

Environment Agency teams are relocating hundreds of native crayfish to help boost their numbers.

Climate and energy

[Climate crisis is greatest ever threat to human rights, UN warns](#)

Rights chief Michelle Bachelet highlights role in civil wars

[British seagrass could help tackle climate change](#)

The aquatic plant, which is found in beds around the UK coast, can store carbon 35 times faster than tropical rainforests.

Waste

[Young leaders around the world to join the fight against plastic pollution](#)

The Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Badge will be extended to a further 15 countries.

Animal Research

[Humans haven't just changed what dogs look like—we've altered the very structure of their brains](#)

Research funding and higher education policy

[UK set to take centre stage in world science](#)

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom welcomes a significant boost for UK science in the government's Spending Round, committing to support investment in research and development.

[Why we need to reimagine how we do research](#)

Diversity and inclusion

[Gender equality: 'No room at the top for women scientists'](#)

[Many universities 'going backwards' on gender equality in science](#)

Decline in female representation reported at four in 10 institutions covered by study

International news

[Trump administration weakens Endangered Species Act](#)

Changes to the United States' landmark conservation law make it easier to strip threatened species of the strongest protections.

[£5.3m joint investment to support sustainable food production in Latin America](#)

[Woman is first to receive cornea made from 'reprogrammed' stem cells](#)

The Japanese woman's vision has improved since the transplant, say her doctors.

[Deadly olive tree disease spreads to France](#)

Two trees infected with subspecies of *Xylella fastidiosa* that killed 1m trees in Italy

[First hint that body's 'biological age' can be reversed](#)

In a small trial, drugs seemed to rejuvenate the body's 'epigenetic clock', which tracks a person's biological age.

[Philippines culls 7,000 pigs in outbreak of African swine fever](#)

Infected pigs found in two towns near capital Manila, as country becomes latest to be hit by disease

Opinion

[We scientists must rise up to prevent the climate crisis. Words aren't enough](#)

Our profession has been great at raising awareness. But this alone won't succeed against the might of the oil and gas lobbyists

[To save honey bees we need to design them new hives](#)

[Big science and small government don't mix](#)

Opportunities

[RSB Website survey](#)

The RSB website survey is now open for anyone to report back on their user experiences of the current website and what features they would like the new website to have.

Closes: 30 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 [Abergavenny Food Festival 2019](#) at Abergavenny, Wales, on **21st – 22nd September 2019**; [Big Biology Day Cambridge](#) at Cambridge CB2 8PE, on **5th October 2019**; and 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

[BioArtAttack Competition](#)

What is a BioArtAttack? Your entry can be anything from drawings and sculptures to models and collages of any scale. The piece of art created can be entered by an individual or as a group, including classes, lab groups or any group of biology enthusiasts.

Closes: 13 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

[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

Athena SWAN review

Advance HE commissioned a Steering Group to undertake an independent review of the Athena SWAN charter. The Steering Group has completed the first part of its review and this has informed the current [survey](#), which is open for completion.

Authors wanted for OUP-RSB biology primers

The RSB and Oxford University Press are looking for academic authors to contribute to the ongoing Oxford Biology Primers series of textbooks. Experts in fields including microbiology, stem cells, ageing, and the microbiome are encouraged to contact tom.ireland@rsb.org.uk for more details. The third book in the series, Hormones, is out now, with further titles available to pre-order [here](#).

Consultations

Call for evidence on the use of genome editing in farmed animals

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has launched a call for evidence to inform its inquiry into the use of genome editing techniques in farmed animals. 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: 20 September 2019

Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living

Closes: 20 September 2019

Improving higher technical education

Closes: 29 September 2019

Standards for biodegradable, compostable and bio-based plastics: call for evidence

Closes: 14 October 2019

Developing a national food strategy

Closes: 25 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

Pharmacology and Drug Discovery Workshop 2019

19 - 20 September 2019

Manchester Conference Centre, Manchester

Women in Biotech - Cambridge Edition

26 September 2019

Babraham Research Campus, Cambridge

[Insect declines in the headlights](#)

7 October 2019

Royal College of Physicians, London

A free Policy Lates on insect decline. This event will explore the evidence behind the headlines. We will consider what we know about insect declines and what we don't know, to better understand the causes and consequences of insect population changes. Our expert panel will discuss how we monitor and conserve this vital and diverse group of organisms, while addressing challenges such as crop protection and control of pest species.

[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

[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...

[Spiders are threatened by climate change – and even the biggest arachnophobes should be worried](#)

[ETLS focuses on Big Data, Synthetic Biology and Bioethics](#)

The latest issue of Emerging Topics in Life Science (ETLS) focuses on interpreting and integrating big data in bioscience. Eight review articles look at the specific challenges of using big data, such as extracting useful information from unstructured biomedical data, and the use of data in fields such as crystallography and RNA research. Further issues of ETLS will focus on synthetic biology (September) and bioethics (October). To sign up for alerts, please click the title.

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