

## Plant Science Newsletter – a monthly round-up of policy headlines and stories

October 2021

This newsletter provides links to published news articles from a range of sources. Views or opinions presented are those of the original author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Royal Society of Biology.

### News and debate

#### RSB news

##### [RSB on the 2021 Budget: R&D investment still needs to grow](#)

On Wednesday 27th October 2021, Chancellor Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP delivered the 2021 Budget, which he said will prepare the country for a post pandemic 'age of optimism'.

##### [Big numbers aplenty as Policy Lates tackles the complexities of food](#)

Attendees of the latest RSB Policy Lates discussion heard a variety of staggering and sobering statistics on the need to reform the way we grow and consume food.

#### Plant health and biosecurity

##### [Stink bug discovery raises fears of threat to crops](#)

A stink bug that can spoil crops and infest homes has been trapped in Surrey as part of a monitoring study, BBC News reports.

##### ['Robust action' taken against tree disease found in Cornwall](#)

Following detection of the tree pathogen *Phytophthora pluvialis*, landowners, woodland managers, tree nurseries and the forest industry are being asked to remain vigilant, BBC News reports.

#### Agriculture

##### [Farming Innovation Programme launched to boost the future of farming](#)

The government has announced funding for farmers, growers, foresters and other businesses, aiming to enhance innovation, maximise productivity and drive sustainability.

##### ['It's not as carbon-hungry': UK's largest sunlit vertical farm begins harvest](#)

The largest naturally lit vertical farm in Britain has begun harvesting, and the creators plan to build 40 more, The Guardian reports.

### [Turning over a new leaf: the humble hedge stages a remarkable comeback](#)

The Guardian describes a reversal of the trend for ripping out hedges, as farmers hail the ecological benefits.

### [New EU farm to fork strategy to make our food healthier and more sustainable](#)

A European Parliament Press release describes how Members of the European Parliament present plans revamping the EU's food systems to produce healthier food, ensure food security, a fair income for farmers and reduce agriculture's environmental footprint.

### [More to climate change than just temperature: recent weather patterns led to smaller harvests](#)

Rothamsted Research covers how weather conditions typical of the last 30 years have significantly limited harvests of winter wheat and spring barley, according to analyses of 124 years of crop yields obtained from long term experiments.

## **Food security**

### [Fears global energy crisis could lead to famine in vulnerable countries](#)

One of world's biggest fertiliser producers calls for action as high gas prices force it to slash production, The Guardian reports.

### [UN development goal of zero hunger 'tragically distant', global index shows](#)

Global targets to eradicate hunger by 2030 will be missed as the climate crisis, conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic reverse progress, according to new projections described in The Guardian.

## **Biodiversity and conservation**

### [How biodiversity loss is jeopardising the drugs of the future](#)

Plants are a source of potential new medicines, but overuse of wild medicinal plants could limit future opportunities to source medicines from nature, The Guardian reports.

### [Biodiversity: world leaders are negotiating new targets to protect nature by 2030 – the story so far](#)

The COP15 online gathering saw new funds pledged to reduce species loss by China, Japan and the EU, a piece in The Conversation explains.

### [South Downs National Park: Funding boost for chalk grassland restoration](#)

Rare chalk grassland is to be restored with the help of a £2m grant, BBC News reports.

### [Hoylake beach: Grassland rewilding scheme criticised](#)

Vegetation on a Merseyside beach, which is turning into grassland in a bid to improve biodiversity, is proving controversial, BBC News reports.

### [Plymouth War on Weeds campaign branded 'shameful'](#)

A council's campaign for a 'War on Weeds' using chemical sprays has been criticised by environmentalists, reports BBC News.

## Forestry

### [Climate crisis: what can trees really do for us?](#)

Can the world's mature forests stand changing conditions and continue to offset some of our emissions from burning fossil fuels? An experiment in a Staffordshire woodland aims to find out, and is described in The Conversation.

### ['More homegrown timber needed' to cut emissions](#)

Building the homes of the future will require Wales to become a 'forest nation', according to industry experts, reports BBC News.

### [Climate change: Human activity makes forests emit carbon](#)

Ten of the world's most protected forests have become net emitters of carbon, as they are degraded by human activity and climate change, BBC News reports.

### [Spain's untapped 'liquid gold'](#)

In one Spanish province, locals believe the age-old practice of tapping pine trees for resin could help the planet, says an article in BBC Travel.

## People

### [Obituary: Simon Leather](#)

A British Ecological Society post on Professor Simon Leather, leading ecologist and entomologist and passionate educator, remembered by former student and outreach collaborator Chris Jeffs and friend and colleague Allan Watt.

### [Wellcome appoints first climate director](#)

The role has been created as part of Wellcome's new strategy, which sees focus on three urgent global health challenges: climate change and health, infectious disease, and mental health, reports Wellcome News.

### [New rose named after one of UK's first documented black gardeners](#)

One of Britain's first known black gardeners has been honoured with a rose named after him in celebration of his life.

## Opinion

### [Cop26 must not overshadow Kunming: we need joint climate and biodiversity goals](#)

All eyes are on Cop26 in Glasgow, but the UN biodiversity conference in Kunming (Cop15), should not be overshadowed, argues an opinion piece in The Guardian.

## Opportunities

### [Have your say on the risks of plant pests and pathogens for habitat creation and restoration](#)

Researchers from the James Hutton Institute are seeking views from anyone involved in habitat restoration or creation, from across the UK. Through a survey devised in partnership with Scotland's Plant Health Centre and NatureScot, Hutton ecologists seek to better understand the plant health risks associated with habitat creation and habitat restoration.

Closes: 30 November 2021

### [BioArtAttack 2021](#)

Get creative and submit an entry for our BioArtAttack 2021 competition! Your entry could be a drawing, collage or even a sculpture, taking inspiration from the smallest or the largest parts of the living world. Submit a photograph of your BioArtAttack online and visit our website for further information.

Closes: 30 November 2021

### [Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award](#)

Now open for nominations, the award aims to identify the UK's leading bioscience higher education (HE) teachers, recognising the invaluable role they play in educating and inspiring the next generation of biologists. If you know a bioscience lecturer who deserves recognition for their passion and ideas, encourage them to submit an application this year.

Closes: 30 November 2021

### [STEM for BRITAIN 2022](#)

STEM for BRITAIN is a poster competition for early-stage researchers which is held in the Houses of Parliament. Applications are invited in five subject categories: Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Physics, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Chemistry. Finalists will be invited to an event in the Houses of Parliament where they will present their poster to Parliamentarians and the subject judges. Applications are now open for STEM for BRITAIN 2022. The closing date for applications is Monday 6th December 2021. The finals of the competition will be held in the Houses of Parliament on Monday 7th March 2022 (subject to COVID-19 restrictions).

Closes: 6 December 2021

## Consultations

### [Beaver reintroduction and management in England](#)

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) wants to know what you think about their proposed approach to beaver reintroduction and management in England.

Closes: 17 November 2021

### [Plant biosecurity strategy for Great Britain](#)

Defra wants to know your views on how the Government, the plant industry, and the public can help improve plant biosecurity in Great Britain.

Closes: 30 November 2021

### [RSB Policy Resource Library online](#)

The RSB has created a searchable, digital library of more than 800 statements, responses, briefings and other policy resources produced by the RSB and our Member Organisations across the biosciences. This collection is freely and openly accessible to everyone, including members and non-members, through the [mySociety portal](#) (no registration necessary).

## Events

### [Postgraduate Study in Plant Health in the UK](#)

Are you interested in tackling challenges in sustainable agriculture, forestry and horticulture and in researching or developing a career in plant health? The British Society for Plant Pathology, Royal Society for Biology and the Association of Applied Biologists invites prospective masters, PGCert, PGDip or PhD students to join us for a virtual event that will introduce opportunities for postgraduate study in plant health in the UK.

17 November 2021, 14:00-16:30 GMT

### [RSB Connect 2021: bringing outreach and engagement into the future](#)

RSB Connect is a three-day online bioscience outreach and engagement symposium. The event will include talks, presentations, Q&A sessions and networking opportunities to provide training, information and discussion of contemporary issues relating to outreach and engagement. This event is for any academics, early career researchers, bioscientists, outreach and engagement professionals and anyone doing any kind of outreach and engagement within or alongside their work or studies. RSB and event partner Member Organisation's members receive a discounted rate on tickets, please see more details and apply online.

23–25 November 2021

### [The Academic Odyssey The Academic Odyssey Series: First hand talks by researchers on their own experiences. Speaker: Ros Gleadow](#)

The Academic Odyssey Series: First hand talks by researchers on their own experiences. On this occasion Ros Gleadow will share her academic journey, that started when she was 39 years old and decided to start her PhD.

15 December 2021, 07:00–08:00 GMT

### [BSPP2021 – Our Plants, Our Future \(OPOF\) - Joint conference from BSPP and the EFPP](#)

This major joint meeting, postponed from last year, will address scientific, practical and policy aspects of plant health. Inspired by the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), the meeting is aimed at a wide audience, from plant scientists to plant health practitioners. This will be a fantastic opportunity at a premier conference centre to meet and mingle with colleagues from across Europe. Early bird tickets at a reduced rate are available until 30th September. The call for abstracts for speakers and posters is also open until 31st October.

Birmingham and online, 6-8 December 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all RSB events will continue to take place online and updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

## And finally...

### [Burnt seeds show people used tobacco 12,000 years ago](#)

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that hunter-gatherers in North America were using tobacco around 12,300 years ago — 9,000 years earlier than was previously documented, Nature News reports.

### [Growing the future report](#)

*Growing the future* highlights to policymakers and others the excellence of plant science in the UK, and its importance to the biosciences, the economy, and society both at home and around the world. The report is available to download [here](#).

### **RSB Plant Science Group**

### **Royal Society of Biology**

1 Naorji Street, London, WC1X 0GB

[policy@rsb.org.uk](mailto:policy@rsb.org.uk)



[Follow us on Twitter](#)



[Join us on LinkedIn](#)

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.

[Click here to unsubscribe from this publication](#)

**Or, manage your subscription to this and to other RSB publications by logging into [mySociety](#) and choosing 'My Subscriptions' under 'Me and the RSB'.**

---

© Royal Society of Biology 2021. Registered Charity Number: 277981  
1 Naorji Street, London WC1X 0GB