

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

29 May 2020

This newsletter provides links to published news articles, preserving the original title and summary line. 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

#### Top stories

##### [Coronavirus: Test and trace system kicks off in England and Scotland](#)

##### [Government publishes latest R number](#)

The Government Office for Science is publishing the latest R number range for the UK.

##### [Coronavirus: R number 'very similar' across UK](#)

#### Royal Society of Biology news

##### [150 people from around the world tune in for the first ever virtual Policy Lates event](#)

More than 150 people joined a panel of experts online to discuss the challenges and potential solutions to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), as part of the RSB's Policy Lates series.

##### [RSB launches COVID-19 Impact Survey](#)

The Society has launched a survey to find out more about how the bioscience community has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. If you can, please do fill in this short survey to help inform how we support the research community now and in the future.

##### [COVID-19 Bulletin](#)

For further detail on COVID-19 research, news and updates, RSB has developed a periodic bulletin collating some of the bioscience behind the outbreak and response, see [our webpages](#) to read previous editions and subscribe to the next.

##### [Main RSB webpage on COVID-19](#)

The RSB is working to adapt and ensure our services are delivered to the greatest extent possible whilst also taking into account Public Health England and Government advice during the pandemic. We regularly update this [webpage](#) with relevant information about our activities, initiatives and community support.

##### [New Q&A series on bioscience's response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

The Biologist has launched a new COVID Q&A series exploring how life scientists around the world have sprung into action to help understand, track, and treat COVID-19.

##### [Celebrate RSB membership and get three months' free throughout Membership May](#)

The RSB is launching its first ever #MembershipMay campaign across social media, as part of the 10 year anniversary celebrations.

## Health and biomedicine

### [How coronavirus lockdowns stopped flu in its tracks](#)

Reported rates of influenza and other infections have fallen sharply, but some communicable diseases may see a rise.

### [Coronavirus: Children and older adults to take part in vaccine trial](#)

### [Coronavirus: Immune clue sparks treatment hope](#)

### [Ten reasons to be cautious about using R to support decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

### ['Anti-ageing' protein shown to slow cell growth is key in longevity – new research](#)

## Food and drink

### [Eating local and plant-based diets: how to feed cities sustainably](#)

How do you feed a city? It is one of the great questions of our time. After all, for a species that ultimately depends on plants to feed ourselves, we do tend to cram ourselves into places that are rather unfriendly towards them. Our cities are built around cars, offices and perhaps the odd park – not fields of crops.

## Agriculture and fisheries

### [Cross-party group leads calls for Ag Bill boost to genetic innovation post-Brexit](#)

### [Farmers urge UK government to protect food standards in post-Brexit trade bill](#)

Union and consumer groups warn post-Brexit trade policy must hold food imports to same standards as UK

### [Coronavirus: Don't forget rural communities, farmer pleads](#)

## Forestry

### [EU plan for 3bn trees in 10 years to tackle biodiversity crisis](#)

Concern that new strategy, which also includes protecting primeval forests, 'lacks tools'

## Environment and ecology

### [Leicestershire sites developed to protect endangered newts](#)

### [Rare UK wildlife thriving in lockdown, reveals National Trust](#)

Orca, cuckoo and peregrine falcon some of species enjoying breathing space of quieter world

### [Climate change is turning parts of Antarctica green, say scientists](#)

Researchers map 'beginning of new ecosystem' as algae bloom across surface of melting snow

### [Climate change in deep oceans could be seven times faster by middle of century, report says](#)

Uneven heating could have major impact on marine wildlife, as species that rely on each other for survival are forced to move

## Water and air

### [Natural mitigation of flood risk](#)

The UK's flood risk from rivers, surface water and ground-water is projected to increase with climate change. Natural flood management (NFM) can be described as using the natural features of the land to store and slow down the flow of water. NFM is being piloted across the UK and its expansion is an objective of the

Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. This POSTnote examines the evidence for the effectiveness of NFM at reducing flood risk, and successful governance approaches to implementing NFM measures.

### [How the coronavirus pandemic slashed carbon emissions — in five graphs](#)

Near-real-time data on carbon emissions reveal the sectors, countries and events that had the most impact, but it is unclear how long the dip will last.

## Climate and energy

### [Britain's largest solar farm poised to begin development in Kent](#)

Cleve Hill, the £450m project producing 350MW, expected to receive go-ahead this week

### ['The human fingerprint is everywhere': Met Office's alarming warning on climate](#)

Exclusively compiled data from the Hadley Centre's supercomputer shows alarming climate trajectory

### [Plantwatch: vital peat needs protection from compost sales](#)

Damaged peatlands account for 5% of all annual manmade greenhouse gas emissions

## Waste

### [Microplastic pollution in oceans vastly underestimated – study](#)

Particles may outnumber zooplankton, which underpin marine life and regulate climate

### [Pollution: Birds 'ingesting hundreds of bits of plastic a day'](#)

## Animal Research

### [Moths do the pollinator night shift – and they work harder than daytime insects](#)

### [Nature: Bumblebees' 'clever trick' fools plants into flowering](#)

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [Cambridge University moves all lectures online until summer 2021](#)

Institution first to announce virtual teaching for next academic year

### [What does the public think about R&D?](#)

### [Everything is on the table: how universities are preparing for financial losses](#)

EAB and AHUA have surveyed university leaders in the UK and US about their response to the financial impacts of Covid-19. EAB's Gary Guadagnolo reports on the findings.

## Schools education policy

### [PM confirms schools, colleges and nurseries on track to begin phased reopening](#)

From 1 June schools, colleges and nurseries are set to open to more children.

### [Coronavirus: What is a blended model of learning?](#)

### [Ofqual GCSE and A level consultation outcomes and autumn exam series proposals](#)

Our decisions following consultation on the exceptional arrangements for awarding calculated grades in GCSEs, AS and A levels this summer; and proposals for an autumn exam series.

## Open access and publication policy

### [Open access: how COVID-19 will change the way research findings are shared](#)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and publishers have pulled together to publish their outputs at an unprecedented rate. So, how have they responded? And how will this change research culture and the way findings are disseminated in future?

## Business and industry

### [£40m grant funding confirmed for business projects tackling post COVID-19 global impact](#)

### [Extraordinary times demand new energy in supporting businesses](#)

## Diversity and inclusion

### [BAME academics are already under-represented. The response to Covid-19 could reduce our numbers even further.](#)

As universities prepare to respond to the financial losses of Covid-19, Winston Morgan warns of a potentially devastating impact on BAME staff.

### [How stories of success can help increase diversity among medical students](#)

### [The new Stepchange is an opportunity to renew our efforts on mental health](#)

Universities UK President Julia Buckingham calls on vice chancellors to demonstrate leadership in committing to mentally healthy universities.

## Ethics

### [Ethical governance in Covid times: the value of the Nolan principles](#)

Covid-19 presents boards of governors with ethical as well as practical concerns. Chair of Rose Bruford College Monisha Shah reflects on the application of the Nolan principles to the current crisis.

## Outreach and engagement

### [Hackathons seek environmental solutions to Covid-19](#)

### [Climate change: Top 10 tips to reduce carbon footprint revealed](#)

## Digital technologies

### [3D-printed drugs could be a godsend for those on multiple pills a day – and potentially life saving](#)

## International news

### [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Situation Dashboard](#)

### [Global report: WHO says the Americas are centre of pandemic as cases surge](#)

Pan American Health Organization warns of 'very tough' weeks ahead; US approaches 100,000 deaths; New Zealand has fifth day with no cases

### [Amazon under threat: Fires, loggers and now virus](#)

## [Endangered shorebirds unsustainably hunted during migrations, records show](#)

More than 30 species, including nine that are threatened, are being hunted unsustainably, report finds

## Opinion

### [Coronavirus: Acting earlier would have saved lives, says Sage member](#)

### [Ten reasons why immunity passports are a bad idea](#)

Restricting movement on the basis of biology threatens freedom, fairness and public health.

### [How lockdown is changing the ecology of our cities?](#)

### [Can renewed interest in nature bring more funds to UK wildlife?](#)

Key to ensuring policymakers see nature's relevance is to show its physical and mental health benefits

### [Covid recovery could 'tip the balance' for nature](#)

## Other

### [British zoos are starving to death – and the most historic of all may be about to slip away](#)

The Zoological Society of London's work has saved species across the globe. Now, amidst the footfall famine of the pandemic – and an uncertain post-lockdown future – it's the zoo that needs saving.

## People

### [Denis Summers-Smith obituary](#)

Pioneering ornithologist whose lifelong study of sparrows taught us much of what we know about their behaviour

### [Meet the COVID busters: Biotech startups pivoting to address the pandemic](#)

### [These researchers spent a winter trapped in Arctic ice to capture key climate data](#)

## Opportunities

### [How you can help with COVID-19](#)

An RSB webpage collating routes through which individuals and businesses can offer their help to support the national effort to respond to the spread of COVID-19.

### [COVID-19 Rapid Response Rolling Call](#)

A rolling call for proposals for rapid research into COVID-19, with the aim to review complete proposals within 4 weeks of submission. This opportunity is targeted at UK-led academic, SME and wider industry research that will address a wide range of COVID-19 knowledge gaps and needs.

### [COVID-19: the impact on technicians in UK higher education and research](#)

The Technician Commitment, in partnership with the Science Council, the Royal Society of Biology, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Wellcome Trust and the Research England funded TALENT programme are undertaking a survey to understand more fully the impact of COVID-19 on the technical community in higher education and research. The technical community is at the forefront of the higher education and research sector's response to COVID-19. This survey will enable us to learn more about the impact of the pandemic on working practices for technicians and to explore how, as a group of organisations, we can shine a light on technical contributions at this extraordinary time and best support technical colleagues moving forwards.

### **[RSB Outreach and Engagement Award 2020](#)**

Are you a bioscience researcher involved in science communication? If you work in any sector of UK biosciences, apply for the Royal Society of Biology Outreach and Engagement Award 2020 and win up to £1500.

**Closes: 26 June 2020**

### **[Royal Society of Biology Photography Competition 2020](#)**

'Our changing world' is the theme of this year's Royal Society of Biology [Photography Competition](#). Life on Earth is dynamic and we invite you to capture these transformations. The competition has two age categories each with a cash prize: 18 and over (£1000) and under 18s (£500).

**Closes: 24 July 2020**

### **[The Nancy Rothwell Award 2020](#)**

The Nancy Rothwell Award 2020 specimen drawing competition for 7 – 18 year olds is now open for submissions. Prizes include an experience day at the Royal Veterinary College for students, and their school can also win £100. Visit the Royal Society of Biology [website](#) for more information.

**Closes: 31 July 2020**

## Consultations

### **[Impact of Covid-19 disruptions on schools and higher education institutions](#)**

An inquiry by the education select committee is open until end of May, considering the implementation of the critical workers policy, fairness of qualification arrangements and progression to next stages of education, and financial implications of closures for Higher Education Institutions. If you plan to submit evidence, please let us know by emailing [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk).

**Closes: 31 May 2020**

### **[A new UK research funding agency](#)**

The Government has declared it intends to create a new agency to be "broadly modelled" on the US ARPA, which will provide long term funding to support visionary high-risk, high-pay off scientific, engineering, and technology ideas. The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee will inquire formally into the nature and purpose of this new UK research funding agency and invites written submissions. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk) for more information and if you would like to contribute.

**Closes: 30 June 2020**

### **[The science of COVID-19](#)**

The Science and Technology Committee (Lords) is investigating the scientific and technological aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the nature of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, its transmission and spread, the development of vaccines and treatments, and how digital technologies can be used for tracking and modelling. The inquiry aims to help Government and society learn from the pandemic and better prepare for future epidemics.

**Closes: 30 June 2020**

### **[UK Science, Research and Technology Capability and Influence in Global Disease Outbreaks](#)**

The Science and Technology Committee will inquire formally into the place of UK research, science and technology in the national and global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and what lessons should be learned for the future. If you plan to submit evidence, please let us know by emailing [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk).

**Closes: 31 July 2020**

### **[Plastic Packaging Tax: policy design](#)**

This consultation seeks views on areas of the Plastic Packaging Tax which have been further refined as we move closer to the implementation date of April 2022.

**Closes: 20 August 2020**

## [River basin planning: Challenges and Choices](#)

The Environment Agency is holding a consultation to gather views on the challenges our waters face and the choices we all need to make to help tackle those challenges.

**Closes: 24 September 2020**

## [RSB Policy Resource Library now 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

The RSB has postponed all in person events due to take place before 1st September 2020. We will aim to reschedule, or hold virtually, all cancelled events where possible, and updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). These events will hopefully run later in year or in 2021.

We are aware that a number of events previously advertised in the Science Policy Newsletter have been cancelled owing to the novel coronavirus Covid-19. We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

## And finally...

### [Why glass frogs have see-through skin becomes clear in study](#)

While colour of body changes little, legs are more translucent to help amphibians to blend in

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