

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

11 June 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

Royal Society of Biology news

[COVID-19 Bulletin](#)

For further detail on COVID-19 research, news and updates, RSB produces a bulletin collating some of the bioscience behind the outbreak and response. The latest edition, published on 5th May 2021, includes updates on: SARS-CoV-2 viral variants, long COVID, airborne transmission, testing and surveillance, vaccines and immunity, research funding and the effects of the pandemic on students' lives. See [our webpages](#) to read previous editions and subscribe to the next.

Health and biomedicine

[Bowel sensors among 20 innovative healthcare technology projects](#)

UK Research and Innovation describes how researchers aim to develop tiny robotic sensors to detect bowel cancers, the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK.

[A complete human genome sequence is close: how scientists filled in the gaps](#)

Researchers added 200 million DNA base pairs and 115 protein-coding genes — but they've yet to entirely sequence the Y chromosome, reports Nature News.

[Opinion: The road to 1 billion vaccines – what Covid-19 dose sharing commitments are needed from the G7](#)

As the G7 leaders meet in Cornwall this month [June], Wellcome calls on them to share 1 billion vaccine doses before the end of 2021, starting immediately.

Food and drink

[World Food Safety Day: Ensuring safe food for a healthy tomorrow](#)

To mark World Food Safety Day, BBSRC brought together insights from across science, business and society to ensure safe, sustainable food for all.

[New mentor scheme launched to boost UK food exporters](#)

The Government has stated that a new mentor scheme was launched with the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and National Farmers Union to help UK food producers export.

[Most food brands a long way from meeting sugar reduction targets](#)

The Nuffield Department of Population Health research shows that less than half of leading food brands have significantly reduced the sugar content of their products.

Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

[World's soils 'under great pressure', says UN pollution report](#)

Soils provide 95% of all food but are damaged by industrial, farming, mining and urban pollution, reports The Guardian.

Forestry

[Eighteen million trees to be planted around Glasgow](#)

An urban forest, consisting of 18 million trees, is to be planted in and around Glasgow over the next 10 years, according to BBC News.

Environment and ecology

[Restoration call for area 'the size of China' to protect falling biodiversity and food insecurity](#)

United Nations agencies have said an area of land roughly the size of China needs restoring if the planet's biodiversity and the communities who rely on it are to be protected.

[Climate change threatening iconic British species says WWF](#)

The report notes the impact of climate change on several species across the globe, including three in the UK, says Sky News.

[World Environment Day: Over £8m boost for international conservation](#)

A Government press release describing how the funding will also help protect a number of rare species and vulnerable habitats across the globe from the threats of invasive species.

Water and air

[Government sets out marine commitments to mark World Ocean Day](#)

A Government press release describing how countries have signed up to back '30by30' and plans to pilot greater protections for England's waters.

[Oceans need protection now. A new blueprint may help countries reach their goals.](#)

Giving the ocean space to recover promises to help declining fish populations recover, restore habitat, and help save the climate, according to a new plan to save the seas, reports National Geographic.

[Climate crisis is suffocating the world's lakes, study finds](#)

The Guardian covers how the climate crisis is causing a widespread fall in oxygen levels in lakes across the world, suffocating wildlife and threatening drinking water supplies.

Climate and energy

[Scottish climate campaign to highlight net-zero benefits](#)

People across Scotland are being urged to help tackle the climate emergency ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year, reports BBC News.

Government and Parliament

[Government and life science industry join forces on 100 Days Mission for future pandemics](#)

A Government press release describing a new commitment for partnership working to achieve the ambition of better pandemic preparedness.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Government launches search for new research agency leadership](#)

The Government has begun its search for a chief executive of the Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA) – the UK's new, independent science funding body.

[New analysis explores local variations in graduate opportunities](#)

Graduates are most likely to enter well-paid jobs if they live in London or the South East. However, opportunities for highly-skilled work can be found widely across the country – according to new analysis by the Office for Students.

Schools education policy

[Huge expansion of tutoring in next step of education recovery](#)

The Government has stated £1 billion for a national tutoring revolution, which will see up to 100 million tutoring hours for children and young people across England.

[Covid has eroded progress by disadvantaged pupils in England, finds study](#)

Research shows regional disparities, with some children in the north losing twice as much learning, reports The Guardian.

Business and industry

[Firms must commit to net zero to win major Government contracts](#)

The Government has announced new measures that will require businesses to commit to net zero by 2050 before they can bid for major Government contracts.

Diversity and inclusion

[Celebrating Pride month at the RSB](#)

In line with our diversity and inclusion work we are marking Pride month by temporarily updating our logo across social media with our own tribute to the [Progress Pride flag](#), designed by Daniel Quasar. The flag embodies the six stripes of the classic Pride flag and also features chevrons representing the trans, non-binary and LGBT+ BAME communities in recognition of the need for intersectionality across liberation efforts. We'll also be sharing information about LGBT representation on social media, as well as advice and best practice on how to make a workplace more inclusive.

[Rainbow Research – Pride Month 2021](#)

The British Ecological Society's journals are publishing Rainbow Research, a series of blog posts which aims to promote visibility of researchers from the LGBTQ+ community. Each post, published throughout the month of June, follows a theme represented by the colours shown in the Progress Pride flag.

Ethics

[Wanted: rules for pandemic data access that everyone can trust](#)

In the wake of COVID, a pandemic treaty could be a way to agree on data access before the next emergency strikes, says this Nature Editorial.

[Patient data transfer still set to start in July](#)

BBC News covers how the Government is proceeding with the creation of a central store of data from GP records in England next month, despite the NHS suggesting a delay.

Outreach and engagement

[Public urged to Plant For Our Planet in a new campaign](#)

A new campaign aimed at inspiring the nation to get planting has been launched by the Government, helping us to build back greener and step up our efforts to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

Digital technologies

[Haptic tech turns phones into multi-sensory nature learning tools](#)

UK Research and Innovation has announced researchers will develop new technology to allow children to experience nature through their smartphones by 'feeling' textures such as feathers, fur and tree bark.

International news

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

The World Health Organisation summarises the reported number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths.

[Invasive pest spread another fallout from climate change, UN-backed study finds](#)

Climate change is making pests which ravage important agricultural crops even more destructive, heightening threats to global food security and the environment, a United Nations-backed study has found.

[WHO guidance weighs risks, rewards of GM mosquitoes](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released new guidance for the deployment of genetically modified (GM) mosquitoes to combat vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue, according to SciDev.Net.

['Miraculous' mosquito hack cuts dengue by 77%](#)

BBC News covers how dengue fever cases have been cut by 77% in a 'groundbreaking' trial that manipulates the mosquitoes that spread it.

[Landmark Alzheimer's drug approval confounds research community](#)

Many scientists say there is not enough evidence that Biogen's aducanumab is an effective therapy for the disease, reports Nature News.

People

[An inclusive mindset for adult learners: an international perspective](#)

Professor Liz Johnson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Deakin University, shares her experience of supporting return-to-study learners with the Office for Students.

Opportunities

[Apprentice of the Year Award 2021](#)

The Royal Society of Biology's Apprentice of the Year Award is open for entries. The Award, now in its 2nd year, has been set up to celebrate apprentices working in the bioscience sector and recognise their contribution to their teams and the wider bioscience community. Further details about the award including how to apply, key dates and application forms can be found on the RSB [website](#).

Closes: 16 July 2021

[RSB ambassadors - open for applications](#)

Are you an enthusiastic, active and engaged member of the RSB who would like to act as a key contact for the RSB at your workplace, while encouraging others to get involved? [Apply now](#) to become an [RSB ambassador](#). N.B. At this stage, we are only accepting applications from UK-based members at the AMRSB, MRSB and FRSB grade.

Closes: 31 July 2021

Consultations

[Role of biomass in achieving net zero](#)

This call for evidence aims to strengthen the Government's evidence base around biomass and will contribute to a review of the potential for biomass to support the UK's net zero target.

Closes: 15 June 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

[Parliamentary Links Day 2021](#)

22 June 2021

10:00 BST

Parliamentary Links Day is the largest science event on the annual Parliamentary events calendar. It is organised by the Royal Society of Biology on behalf of the science and engineering community to strengthen dialogue with Parliament, and to provide MPs with a more rounded understanding of the scientific issues we face. This year's theme is Science and Climate Change.

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...

[Whale that travelled halfway around the world sets migration record](#)

It turns out the animal had travelled at least 20,000 kilometres – halfway around the planet – setting a record for a migration of any mammal, barring humans, reports New Scientist.

Royal Society of Biology

Science Policy Team

1 Naoroji Street

London

WC1X 0GB

policy@rsb.org.uk

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