

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

17 September 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

[Society urges PM to take the lead in tackling 'deadly' climate crisis](#)

The RSB has written to prime minister Boris Johnson ahead of November's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, urging his Government to do justice to the UK's history of leadership on environmental issues.

[UKRI chief executive briefs RSB Member Organisations on the future of UK research](#)

UKRI chief executive Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser has set out her vision for the UK's research landscape in the coming years at an online meeting of the RSB's Member Organisations.

Health and biomedicine

[Trove of CRISPR-like gene-cutting enzymes found in microbes](#)

The search for a CRISPR enzyme's ancestors has revealed more than one million potential genome-editing tools, reports Nature News.

[NHS England announces large-scale trial of potential early cancer test](#)

According to the Guardian, more than 100,000 volunteers aged between 50 and 77 sought to take part in the Galleri blood screening.

Food and drink

[New labelling to fly the flag for our farmers and give shoppers better information](#)

A Government press release covers how outside the EU, new food labelling could empower consumers to support British farmers and improve animal welfare.

[UK to spearhead Europe-wide initiative to reduce sugar and calorie intake in food](#)

The Government has stated that the UK was chosen to lead the new World Health Organization Sugar and Calorie Reduction Network after progress with its domestic sugar-reduction programme.

Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

[£24 million for cutting-edge science and fisheries](#)

The UK Government announces its first investment from £100 million UK Seafood Fund to boost innovation in the fishing industry.

Environment and ecology

[Ambitious research to study key environmental science questions](#)

Five innovative new research projects could push the boundaries of science and help us understand key questions of environmental and earth science, according to UK Research and Innovation.

[Local nature recovery strategies](#)

This POSTnote summarises the Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) approach, including mapping ecological networks, the opportunities for LNRSs to deliver wider benefits to nature and people, and the likely challenges associated with the strategies and their delivery.

[Animals 'shapeshifting' in response to climate crisis, research finds](#)

Warm-blooded animals are changing beaks, legs and ears to adapt to a hotter climate and better regulate temperature, reports the Guardian.

Water and air

[Leading conservation charity ZSL provides vital new evidence to inform sustainable marine management in the region](#)

Leading conservation charity, the Zoological Society of London, provides vital new evidence to inform sustainable marine management in the region.

Climate and energy

[Most fossil-fuel reserves must remain untapped to hit 1.5 °C warming goal](#)

Nature News covers how modelling suggests that many planned coal, oil and gas extraction projects will not be viable if the world hopes to achieve climate targets.

[Climate change: World now sees twice as many days over 50C](#)

The number of extremely hot days every year when the temperature reaches 50C has doubled since the 1980s, a global BBC analysis has found.

[Biggest ever renewable energy support scheme backed by additional £265 million](#)

Details of how the UK will get more electricity from renewable sources will be published, as the Government announces the biggest-ever round of its flagship renewable energy scheme.

Waste

[Plastic pollution: Could recycling PPE reduce the problem?](#)

Discarded face masks could be melted down and recycled to help tackle plastic pollution, reports BBC News.

Animal research

[Scientists use gene editing tool to target mosquito-spread disease](#)

A new gene editing tool has been successfully applied to the southern house mosquito by researchers at the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council-funded Pirbright Institute.

Government and Parliament

[Next generation of UK science leaders backed with £113 million to bring innovations to market](#)

The Government has stated nearly 100 cutting edge projects will tackle major global issues, ranging from climate change to chronic disease.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Opinion: How the 2021 Spending Review can make the UK a 'science superpower'](#)

The Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) Assistant Director Daniel Rathbone sets out CaSE's key asks from the 2021 Spending Review and the rationale behind them.

[Continuity Grants: ensuring UK R&D activity during COVID-19](#)

Innovate UK's Continuity Grants programme helped ensure UK research and development (R&D) activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, writes Louis Robertson, Project Co-ordinator, Continuity Grants, Innovate UK.

[Research mentoring efforts 'undervalued' in UK universities](#)

Times Higher Education covers how nearly half of senior researchers in UK universities do not feel valued for their work supporting the careers of junior colleagues, a major survey says.

Open access and publication policy

[Opinion: Preprint advocates must also fight for research integrity](#)

Efforts to share research with the public must include mechanisms to prevent harm resulting from low-quality work, reports Nature World View.

Business and industry

[Green jobs: The new generation of workers making it work for them](#)

From running huge wind farms out at sea to making new devices to heat our homes, the UK is seeing a rise in interest in so-called green jobs, reports BBC News.

Diversity and inclusion

[Opinion: Push to meet the challenges facing disabled students](#)

As students return to campus, Kathryn Mitchell, Vice Chancellor, University of Derby, and Megan Hector, Policy and Research Manager, Policy Connect, discuss what can be done to support students with disabilities.

[Written response to open letter on under representation and active participation](#)

UK Research and Innovation has published a response to an open letter authored by Dr Addy Adelaine, Dr Chisomo Kalinga, Dr Furaha Asani, Dr Ruth Ngozika Agbakoba, Natasha Smith, Dr Olumide Adisa, Janine Francois, Dr Michelle King-Okoye, Paulette Williams and Dr Ruby Zelzer.

[Women less likely to win major research awards](#)

Although the gap is narrowing, prestigious prizes are still more likely to go to men, finds an analysis of gender bias in the world's top science awards, writes Nature News.

Outreach and engagement

[Asian Hornet Week – Hunt for Asian hornets](#)

Two Animal and Plant Health Agency National Bee Unit Inspectors, Meg Seymour and Gordon Bull, talk of their experiences with the Asian hornet to encourage sightings during September when potential Asian hornet nest activity is at its peak, and they are more likely to be seen.

[Food, theatre and music engage young people with climate research](#)

UK Research and Innovation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have announced a £120,000 investment in 15 projects across the UK. These will encourage 14 to 18-year-olds to engage with and contribute to important climate research.

[Opinion: How people-powered conservation is helping to revive the UK's national parks](#)

Seventy years since the UK's first national parks were created, they're receiving more visitors than ever. However, with rising tourist footfall and declining biodiversity, hands-on help to preserve our parks is vital, reports National Geographic.

Digital technologies

[Low cost rapid sensors used to rapidly detect infections in wounds](#)

Low-cost screen-printed carbon sensors have been used to rapidly detect bacteria commonly found in wounds, paving the way for a real-time medical device, writes UK Research and Innovation.

International news

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

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

[How COVID is derailing the fight against HIV, TB and malaria](#)

The pandemic's effects on efforts to thwart other infectious diseases could exceed the direct impact of COVID-19, writes Nature News.

Other

[Opinion: Biology must generate ideas as well as data](#)

In an article for Nature World View, Sir Paul Nurse, Chief Executive Officer, the Francis Crick Institute, writes data should be a means to knowledge, not an end in themselves.

People

[COVID advances win US\\$3-million Breakthrough prizes](#)

Pioneers of mRNA vaccines and next-generation sequencing techniques are among the winners of science's most lucrative awards, reports Nature News.

Opportunities

[RSB Policy Internships](#)

The application window is now open for two UKRI policy internship positions with RSB. The scheme is open to current PhD students who are funded by [AHRC](#), [BBSRC](#), [EPSRC](#), [ESRC](#), [MRC](#), and [NERC](#). Successful applicants will spend three months working at the RSB in 2022. Start and end dates can be negotiated as appropriate. For further information and to apply, visit the [UKRI Policy Internships Scheme webpage](#).

Closes: 4 October 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.

Closes: 6 December 2021

Consultations

[Reproducibility and research integrity](#)

The Science and Technology Committee (Commons) is seeking responses as part of its inquiry into reproducibility and research integrity.

Closes: 30 September 2021

[Reforming the framework for better regulation](#)

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is conducting a consultation to review the way the Better Regulation Framework operates to ensure it remains fit for purpose and delivers Government's regulatory strategy objectives.

Closes: 1 October 2021

[Independent review of research bureaucracy](#)

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is seeking views on ways to substantially reduce research bureaucracy, primarily for the benefit of individuals and teams conducting research.

Closes: 1 October 2021

[Review of the code of practice for scientific advisory committees and councils](#)

The 'Code of practice for scientific advisory committees and councils' (CoPSAC) is a guidance document that applies to any science advisory committee or council, affiliated to one or more organisations within Government, that provides independent expert advice to facilitate decision making. This consultation seeks views on the revised version.

Closes: 8 October 2021

[Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include](#)

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) wants to know what you think about preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategies and what to include. The strategies are a new system of maps and proposed actions for nature's recovery. The Environment Bill will create a legal requirement for these to be created across England.

Closes: 2 November 2021

[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

[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

[Celebrating Diversity in Drug Discovery](#)

23 September 2021

16:30 - 18:00

Discovery Sciences at AstraZeneca is not only a pivotal cog of drug discovery - it is also home of a diverse group of world class scientists. Join the next Diversity in Discovery Sciences event to hear the different stories of five inspiring scientists - all joined together by their curiosity and passion for science.

[Policy Lates: Rethinking our food system](#)

4 October 2021

18:30 - 20:15

A Policy Lates panel discussion exploring different landscapes associated with food, and the challenges and choices they present us with. Chaired by Dr Simon Doherty FRSB FRCVS, Queen's University Belfast, the panel of expert speakers will discuss the complex development of food policy nationally and internationally. The discussion will chart the balancing act this involves, bringing in needs for food security, reversing biodiversity loss and achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions targets.

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...

[Cows 'potty-trained' in experiment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#)

In the latest study, scientists tried a method they called the MooLoo approach to teach calves to use a toilet area in their barn, meaning that urine could be collected and treated, reports the Guardian.

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