

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

22 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

#### Health and biomedicine

##### [COVID super-immunity: one of the pandemic's great puzzles](#)

People who have previously recovered from COVID-19 have a stronger immune response after being vaccinated than those who have never been infected. Scientists are trying to find out why, reports Nature News.

##### [Scientists uncover circadian rhythm in heart cells](#)

A study has shown how circadian rhythms in heart cells help to change heart function and may explain why shift workers are more vulnerable to heart problems, reports UK Research and Innovation.

##### [Climate action needed to avert 'health catastrophe'](#)

SciDev.Net covers how an open letter signed by more than 450 organisations, called on national leaders and country delegations at COP26 in Glasgow next month, to put 'human health and equity' at the centre of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.

#### Food and drink

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

According to the Guardian, campaigners fear climate breakdown, Covid and violent conflict are threatening any progress made in food security in recent years.

##### [Maintaining quality of food imports on this World Food Day](#)

A blog by Defra digital describes how World Food Day is observed every year on 16th October to promote, raise awareness and tackle the issues of food quality and worldwide hunger, working towards their goal of eradicating hunger issues by 2030.

#### Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

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

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

##### [Farm subsidies: NI farmers share over £300m in direct payments](#)

Just over £300m will be paid out to farmers in Northern Ireland, as the first of this year's direct payments hit applicants' bank accounts, according to BBC News.

## Environment and ecology

### [One in five of Europe's bird species slipping towards extinction](#)

The Guardian covers how the 'Red list' report finds 30% of native species are in decline due to loss of habitat, intensive farming and climate crisis.

### [Nature in Wales: Donkeys, sharks among wildlife helped by new fund](#)

From donkeys in Snowdonia to sharks in Carmarthen Bay, some of Wales' rarest and quirkiest animal habitats will benefit from a fund for conservation, says BBC News.

### [New strategy launched to protect chalk streams](#)

A Government press release describing how the Environment Agency has welcomed a new chalk stream strategy to protect 'England's rainforests'.

## Climate and energy

### [Your Guide to the COPs – Part 1 CBD COP15](#)

The first in a series of blogs, written by Enya O'Reilly for the British Ecological Society giving an overview of COP15 and COP26. This post introduces the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15.

### ['Overwhelming' backing for strong climate action, UK study shows](#)

The biggest ever analysis shows the public backs carbon tax on industry, flight levies and grants for heat pumps, reports the Guardian.

### [Six things the UK could do to tackle climate change](#)

BBC News covers how the Government is due to announce its plan for how to reduce the UK's carbon emissions.

## Waste

### [Ambitious project to reverse decades of pollution in Norfolk broad](#)

This Government press release describes how barriers will enable a process called 'bio-manipulation' to transform Hoveton Great Broad into a pristine, species-rich, wildlife haven.

### [Opinion: The plastic recycling system is broken – here's how we can fix it](#)

Writing for The Conversation, researchers summarise potential ways to decrease the plastic pollution that is causing negative consequences for the health of our planet.

### [Levitating oil droplets research may help reduce air pollution](#)

UK Research and Innovation covers how research using sound waves to suspend oil droplets has shown that the air pollution coming from the tiny droplets may be impacting larger areas of the environment.

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [Opinion: UK can't continue to punch above its weight if it is left out of the arena](#)

The Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) outline why the Spending Review needs to meet the promised R&D investment target.

### [Thousands more adults set to benefit from new technical skills](#)

The Government has stated that thousands of working adults will be offered free courses to rapidly upskill in STEM sectors including engineering, digital and construction.

### [International students need more relevant careers support if UK is to remain a destination of choice](#)

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and Kaplan are publishing new research on the expectations and experiences of international students in relation to careers support and employability.

## Schools education policy

### [Over £300 million to attract and develop world-class teachers and leaders](#)

The Government has stated that new trainee teachers can get bursaries of up to £24,000, and existing teachers in all state schools can access free courses to develop their skills.

## Open access and publication policy

### [Opinion: Recognition in Peer Review](#)

Writing for the Scholarly Kitchen, Haseeb Irfanullah, a biologist-turned-development practitioner, looks at recognition in peer review, what's offered now and what's on the horizon. In addition to how does this affect the process?

## Business and industry

### [Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan kickstarts green investment boom](#)

More than £5.8 billion of foreign investment in green projects has been secured since the launch of the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, according to this Government press release.

### [UN chief urges airlines and shipping firms to do more to cut emissions](#)

The Guardian covers how António Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations, says current efforts are more consistent with global heating 'way above 3C'.

### [UK firms will have to disclose climate impact](#)

BBC News covers how some large UK businesses will have to start disclosing their environmental impact, under new rules set to be brought in by the Treasury.

## Diversity and inclusion

### [Opinion: Universities have a key role in ensuring that Black Careers Matter](#)

Writing for Wonkhe, Tristram Hooley, Professor of Careers Education, University of Derby, presents new research on how universities and employers can ensure that Black graduates thrive in the labour market.

### [Proud to be – Black History Month 2021](#)

A blog from Government Science and Engineering marks the month-long recognition of Black History Month, and this year the theme is 'proud to be'.

### [Opinion: Three ways to help underrepresented groups into higher education](#)

As outgoing and incoming chairs of Realising Opportunities, Ella Ritchie, Professor Emerita, Newcastle University, and Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Emerita, Newcastle University, respond to three key challenges for access and participation post-pandemic.

## Outreach and engagement

### [Walrus from Space census seeks public help to spot animals in satellite images](#)

According to the Guardian, the project aims to give scientists a better understanding of how global heating is affecting the species.

## Digital technologies

### [Diagnostic tech 'out of reach' as rich few dominate market](#)

Despite 'extraordinary innovations' in diagnostics in the past decade, investment in this area of medicine is lacking and new technologies remain out of reach for many countries, reports SciDev.Net.

## International news

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

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

### [Australia's trash tide: what researchers found as they studied 20m pieces of beach rubbish](#)

The Guardian covers how an analysis of coastal rubbish collected over a decade reveals almost half of it is local litter, but in some areas plastic is washing up from overseas.

### [Focal point for climate change is at the top of our world, and agenda](#)

Since the Arctic is the focal point for global climate change, being able to better forecast Arctic warming could help mitigate its impact, both in the Arctic and elsewhere, reports Horizon.

### [UN-backed report reveals rising climate change risk across Africa](#)

United Nations News covers how climate change contributed to mounting food insecurity, poverty and displacement in Africa last year, according to the World Meteorological Organization and partners in a recent report.

## People

### [Henrietta Lacks: 'Mother' of modern medicine honoured](#)

BBC News covers how the World Health Organization has honoured an African-American woman whose cells have led to crucial medical breakthroughs.

### [WHO names researchers to reboot outbreak origin investigations](#)

According to Nature News, the group called SAGO will create a permanent framework for probing epidemics and initiate the next phase of the COVID origins hunt.

### [Q&A: Tanzania's first female doctor sees big strides](#)

Dr Esther Mwaikambo tells SciDev.Net how she aims to be a role model to young female doctors, as she begins writing books on child health and women's roles in medicine.

## Opportunities

### [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**

### [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**

### [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

### [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**

### [The future regulation of medical devices in the United Kingdom](#)

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is inviting members of the public to provide their views on possible changes to the regulatory framework for medical devices in the United Kingdom.

**Closes: 25 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**

### [Labelling for animal welfare](#)

Defra wants to know what you think about possible reforms to food labelling for animal welfare. The aim is to give Defra an understanding of how this might impact business, farmers, and consumers.

**Closes: 6 December 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](#)

**17 November 2021**

**14:00 – 16:30**

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 of 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.

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

**23 – 25 November 2021**

RSB Connect 2021 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](#).

### [The 19th World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology](#)

The 19th World Congress of Basic & Clinical Pharmacology will be taking place in Glasgow, Scotland in July 2023. The programme for the congress is now available and includes cutting-edge science from 484 speakers and chairs from 36 countries. View the programme now: <https://wcp2023.org/programme/>

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...

### [How sea otters help protect underwater meadows](#)

These endangered predators enhance the genetic diversity of eelgrass, making their threatened seagrass surroundings more resilient, reports National Geographic.

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