

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

23 July 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 bimensal bulletin collating some of the bioscience behind the outbreak and response. The latest edition, published on 14th July 2021, includes updates on: the SARS-CoV-2 genome, biomarkers for severe COVID-19, COVID-19 and the brain, the Delta variant, hopes of a blood test for long-COVID, potential new antiviral treatments, and COVID-19 vaccines distribution. We also cover insights on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, mentoring tips, and reasons to hope that a more sustainable world is possible. See [our webpages](#) to read previous editions and subscribe to the next.

Health and biomedicine

[How drug resistant infections are undermining modern medicine and why more research is needed now](#)

A new Wellcome report provides a review of published evidence and testimonies from patients and doctors about how drug-resistant infections are impacting their health and work.

[‘Inflammation clock’ can reveal body’s biological age](#)

A new type of age ‘clock’ can assess chronic inflammation to predict whether someone is at risk of developing age-related disorders such as cardiovascular and neurodegenerative disease, says Nature News.

Forestry

[Restoring forest biodiversity in the Scottish Highlands](#)

The UK currently is one of the least forested countries in Europe, but there is considerable potential for forest expansion, particularly in the uplands. Scotland currently has the highest rates of forest expansion and it is hoped that this reforestation will benefit biodiversity, reports the British Ecological Society.

Environment and ecology

[Coastal Management](#)

The UK coastline is shaped by interactions between complex social, ecological, and physical processes. Increasing coastal flood and erosion risk is a major climate adaptation challenge. This POSTnote examines coastal management in England, associated issues and how an adaptive approach can better prepare the country for uncertain future sea level rise under climate change.

[Opinion: Why climate change is forcing conservationists to be more ambitious: by moving threatened species to pastures new](#)

Writing for The Conversation, Sarah Elizabeth Dalrymple, Senior Lecturer in Conservation Ecology, Liverpool John Moores University, explains why conservationists are being forced to consider whether their conventional approach of maintaining, not changing ecosystems, needs to be adapted to a changing world.

Climate and energy

[Opinion: Expert reaction to UK hot weather and an Extreme Heat Warning issued by the Met Office](#)

Reactions collated by the Science Media Centre (SMC) on how the Met Office has issued an amber warning for extreme heat due to high temperatures through the day and night.

[Opinion: Huge gaps in detection networks plague emissions monitoring](#)

Plug gaps to measure ozone-destroying chemicals and greenhouse gases and verify compliance with Paris and Montreal treaties, says Nature Comment.

[Emissions will hit record high by 2023 if green recovery fails, says IEA](#)

The Guardian covers how a worldwide energy body warns more must be done to help developing countries give up fossil fuels.

[Climate scientists shocked by scale of floods in Germany](#)

The deluge raises fears that human-caused disruption is making extreme weather even worse than predicted, writes the Guardian.

Waste

[Water pollution causing 'death by a thousand cuts' for rivers](#)

Environment Agency (EA) figures suggest the number of incidents rose by almost a quarter in the year to March 2021 compared with the previous year, reports BBC News.

[Using plastic waste to help solve sand shortages](#)

In the face of sand shortages, researchers have found that plastic waste can be turned into a sand alternative for use in concrete, says BBC News.

Research funding and higher education policy

[New conditions will allow regulator to clamp down on poor quality and standards in higher education](#)

The Office for Students (OfS) is consulting on new regulation to protect quality and standards in higher education in England. The new requirements will allow the OfS to intervene more frequently in universities and colleges where courses fall below expectations and require improvement.

[What is R&D's role in levelling up?](#)

Recently, the prime minister gave a set piece speech on his plans to 'level up' the country. Andrew Mackenzie, Head of Policy & Communications, The Physiological Society, explores what this means for UK science.

[Promoting research integrity across the UK](#)

Following engagement with the research sector, UKRI has reaffirmed its commitment to host the new UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI).

Diversity and inclusion

[Opinion: Lewis Hamilton is right about diversity. But the issue goes way beyond motorsport](#)

Chi Onwurah MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM, has written an opinion piece in the Guardian which features some of the findings of a [new report](#) entitled 'Equity in the STEM workforce', which includes the contributions of more than 150 institutions, businesses, networks and individuals, including the Royal Society of Biology.

Among other [RSB Consultation responses](#), you can read the RSB response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM inquiry on equity in the STEM workforce [here](#).

[Opinion: Why We Should All Care about Early Career Pay Equity and Inclusion: An Interview with Becca Bostock and Dominique J. Moore](#)

An interview from the Scholarly Kitchen on how two early career publishers are tackling the thorny issue of pay equity and inclusion.

[Opinion: Let's seize this opportunity to break down barriers faced by disadvantaged students](#)

Writing for Wonkhe, Rae Tooth, Chief Executive, Villiers Park Educational Trust, asks why we should return to normal when the normal system leaves behind so many young people.

International news

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

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

[Climate change: Amazon regions emit more carbon than they absorb](#)

BBC News explains how deforestation and climate change are altering the Amazon rainforest's ability to soak up carbon. According to a new study, significant parts of the world's largest tropical forest have started to emit more CO₂ than they absorb.

Opportunities

[The Nancy Rothwell Award 2021](#)

The Nancy Rothwell Award 2021 specimen drawing competition for 7 – 18 year olds is now open for submissions. Prizes include art materials for students and their school can also win £100. Visit the Royal Society of Biology [website](#) for more information.

Closes: 30 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

[Editor-in-Chief for Emerging Topics in Life Sciences vacancy](#)

The Royal Society of Biology and the Biochemical Society are looking for an Editor-in-Chief for their [Emerging Topics in Life Sciences](#) journal, published by Portland Press. If you would like any additional information about the journal or would like to discuss this opportunity informally, please contact [Emma Pettengale](#), Managing Editor.

Closes: 4 August 2021

[Outreach and Engagement Award 2021](#)

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 2021 and win up to £1500.

Closes: 6 August 2021

[MRC Survey on Diversity in Research](#)

The Medical Research Council (UKRI-MRC) is seeking input from the community about current attitudes to diversity in research to inform future policy development. [This survey](#) includes questions about human, animal, and in vitro studies.

[Flying Ant Survey](#)

Each year in the UK, we witness flying ant day. Over several days each summer, ants, like the black garden ant (*Lasius niger*), take to the air to mate and disperse. The [BioDAR](#) project is using this event to see if this massive increase in aerial insect activity is detectable by their weather radars. If you have seen flying ants this year, please report your sightings using this quick and simple web form. The form can be found here: <https://forms.gle/P3Tof3os6idBCYMA6> and takes about a minute to fill in.

Consultations

[Use of AI in breast cancer screening: rapid review and evidence map](#)

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is inviting comments on the draft report on the use of artificial intelligence for image analysis in the NHS Breast Screening Programme.

Closes: 13 August 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

[Society for Experimental Biology \(SEB\) Careers Week 2021](#)

26 July 2021 – 30 July 2021

A free, online, week-long series of careers talks, workshops and panel discussions from the Society for Experimental Biology.

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...

[First baby beavers born on Exmoor for 400 years](#)

The Natural History Museum covers how for the first time in over four centuries, beavers have bred on Exmoor, southwest England.

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