

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

20 May 2022

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

##### [Innovative autoimmunity projects awarded £1 million of new funding](#)

The British Society for Immunology's Connect Immune Research partnership, collaborating with The Lorna and Yuti Chernajovsky Biomedical Research Foundation, has funded ten new research projects to identify the underlying causes of autoimmune diseases and generate new treatments.

##### [Increased mental health support for children and young people](#)

The Government has announced that thousands of young people will benefit from additional mental health support in their schools, colleges and universities.

##### [Next-gen vaccines set to maintain immunity as the years advance](#)

Horizon covers how European scientists are on a mission to understand waning immunity and to develop strategies that make vaccines work effectively in all age groups.

#### Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

##### [£3.5 million boost to improve England's fisheries](#)

Over the past 12 months, the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme has funded more than 100 projects, delivering benefits to fisheries and anglers across England, according to this Government press release.

##### [Opinion: Discards are damaging – Invasive Species Week](#)

In this Cefas blog, Debbie Murphy, Cefas Aquatic Non-native Species Management team, raises awareness of current issues and what work is being done to address invasive non-native species.

##### [Big tractors, now heavier than many dinosaurs, can damage deep soil](#)

Intense mechanisation is efficient, but may crush the root zone and lessen harvests, reports AAAS Science.

##### [Cress seeds grown in moon dust raise hopes for lunar crops](#)

Thale cress seeds survived but grew more slowly than those planted in volcanic ash, developing stunted roots, reports the Guardian.

## Forestry

### [State-of-the-art tree health laboratory opens to help protect UK forests](#)

The Government has stated that the £5.8 million Holt Laboratory will study known and emerging threats from tree pests and diseases to ensure a robust and rapid response to outbreaks.

## Environment and ecology

### [Environmental Principles Policy Statement published](#)

The Government has stated that a new legally-binding policy statement will embed protections and enhancements for the environment in all Government policy-making.

Among other [RSB consultation responses](#), you can read the RSB response to Defra's consultation on the draft Policy Statement on Environmental Principles [here](#).

### [World Migratory Bird Day illuminates the dark side of light pollution](#)

The United Nations News covers how governments, cities, companies, and communities around the world are taking action to address a significant and growing threat to wildlife, including many species of migratory birds.

## Water and air

### [Delivering the water quality we all want to see](#)

The Government has reinforced its commitment to improving water quality, including through plans for water companies to eliminate harm from sewage discharges.

## Climate and energy

### [COP26 chief: Leaders must do more to honour climate promises](#)

Alok Sharma has said global leaders have not done enough to honour commitments made at the COP26 climate summit, reports BBC News.

### [Record number of polluters set CO2 emissions targets](#)

BBC News covers a United Nations-backed report which states that a record number of big polluters are committing to cutting CO2 emissions.

### [Where will Britain's future energy supply come from?](#)

This House of Commons Library Insight gives an overview of the strategy, responses from stakeholders and outlines policy aiming to create a smooth transition from fossil fuel to low-carbon energy.

## Waste

### [England fails to reach household waste recycling target](#)

Wales was the only UK nation to exceed 50% as households in England recycle less in 2020 than 2019, reports the Guardian.

### [Devon councils team up to tackle plastic pollution](#)

Two councils in Devon have teamed up with a local environmental charity to encourage people, schools and businesses to take part in a national campaign, reports BBC News.

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [First-class degrees more than double in a decade](#)

BBC News covers how the proportion of students in England awarded first-class degrees has more than doubled in a decade.

### [Opinion: UK research status 'at real risk' as Horizon row damage widens](#)

According to Times Higher Education, a leading physicist has warned that the UK will give up its leadership role in EU-wide research projects for a back seat if the association impasse drags on.

## Business and industry

### [Green jobs delivery steps up a gear](#)

The Government has stated that energy minister Greg Hands co-chaired the first meeting of the country's first ever dedicated group for creating UK green job opportunities.

## Diversity and inclusion

### [Levelling up on STEM skills](#)

The British Science Association covers how the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Diversity & Inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths will commission data analysis of STEM skills provision in the UK.

### [Opinion: The Future of EDIS: Working with The Equal Group](#)

Robin Craig, Equality, Diversity and inclusion in Science and Health (EDIS) communications and administration officer, highlights how EDIS is collaborating with strategic consultants The Equal Group to decide what its future development looks like.

### [Opinion: The toll of menopause: how universities can help](#)

This Nature Editorial covers how some women are leaving science because employers are failing to support them during this stage of life.

## International news

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

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

### ['Phage therapy' successes boost fight against drug-resistant infections](#)

Two US patients recover from intractable infections, giving hope for treatments beyond antibiotics, reports the Guardian.

### [Young Indian farmers are turning to an ancient crop to fight water stress and climate change](#)

Writing for The Conversation, Cambridge researchers explore how millets could help make Indian agriculture more sustainable.

### [Two newly described Amazon fish species are on the brink of extinction](#)

New varieties of South American darter fish were documented in Brazil's Apuí region. However, deforestation in the area means they may soon be extinct, reports New Scientist.

## People

### [The people making a difference – meet the ecologist dedicating her life to protecting bats](#)

Morgan Hughes spends all hours studying and protecting these misunderstood creatures – and she asks that her volunteers are looked after too, writes the Guardian.

# Opportunities

## [WCP2023 ECR Design Competition extended](#)

The ECR Pharmacology Logo Design Competition is your chance to have your design featured on promotional materials for WCP2023, which will help raise funds to support the participation of early career researchers at the Congress. There is also a £100 (pounds sterling) Amazon Gift Card up for grabs for the overall winner, and a £25 (pounds sterling) Amazon Gift Card for one runner up.

**Closes: 27 May 2022**

## [Volunteer at The Big Bang Fair](#)

Are you passionate about your work in STEM and keen to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers? The Big Bang Fair is returning from Wednesday 22nd to Friday 24th June 2022 at the NEC in Birmingham.

**Closes: 27 May 2022**

## [John Maddox Prize 2022](#)

As a joint initiative from Sense about Science and the international scientific journal Nature, the prize recognises researchers who have shown great courage and integrity in standing up for science and scientific reasoning, and advancing public discussion of difficult topics, despite fierce opposition and hostility.

**Closes: 30 May 2022**

## [Researchers at Risk Fellowships](#)

The British Academy with Cara (the Council for At-Risk Academics) is establishing a Researchers at Risk Fellowships Programme with the support of the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society. The Fellowships will cover the natural sciences, medical sciences, engineering, humanities and social sciences with applications made via UK-based institutions.

**Closes: 1 June 2022**

## [Call for RSB members and Fellows to deliver training courses](#)

The RSB is currently looking to expand its training provision in a variety of areas, but in particular covering topics of sustainability, biodiversity and ecology. Courses can range from an introduction to a particular topic all the way through to more advanced material for those with pre-existing knowledge/experience. If you feel you have the relevant knowledge and experience to deliver training in a given area we would love to hear from you. [Click here](#) to see a full list of desired programme topics and to download an application form. Please submit any questions, or your completed form by email to [training@rsb.org.uk](mailto:training@rsb.org.uk)

**Closes: 4 June 2022**

## [Apprentice of the Year Award](#)

The award celebrates apprentices and recognises their contribution to their teams and the wider bioscience community. The award forms part of the RSB's wider work supporting technical staff, through our support of the Technician Commitment.

**Close: 20 June 2022**

## [RSB Photography Competition 2022](#)

'Communication' is the theme of this year's Royal Society of Biology Photography Competition. Life on Earth is constantly communicating and this year we invite you to capture these interactions. The competition has two age categories each with a cash prize: 18 and over (£1000) and under 18s (£500).

**Closes: 24 June 2022**

### [RSB Outreach and Engagement Award 2022](#)

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 2022 and win up to £1500.

**Closes: 1 July 2022**

### [The Nancy Rothwell Award 2022](#)

The Nancy Rothwell Award 2022 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: 29 July 2022**

## Consultations

### [Consultation on environmental targets](#)

Defra is seeking views on the first suite of Environment Act 2021 targets.

**Closes: 27 June 2022**

### [Mental health and wellbeing plan](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care is seeking views on what we can do to improve everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

**Closes: 7 July 2022**

### [Legislation for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques](#)

This European Commission consultation seeks to receive citizens' and stakeholders' views (both inside and outside the EU) on the functioning of the current GMO legislation for plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis and their food and feed products, i.e. under the current GMO legislation, and on potential options for a new framework.

**Closes: 22 July 2022**

### [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

### [RSB Plant Health series: Summer Conference 2022](#)

**21 June 2022**

**09:30 - 16:00 BST**

**The Alan Walters Building, University of Birmingham**

The second event in the RSB Plant Health Series will focus on the themes of collaboration and communication throughout the broad diversity of roles that encompass the plant health sector. The conference includes keynote talks, a panel discussion and flash talks from a variety of experts within the plant health community. Attendees can also visit the Wolfson Advanced Glasshouses and Winterbourne Gardens. Register to attend this free event at [www.rsb.org.uk/planthealthconference](http://www.rsb.org.uk/planthealthconference) and direct queries to Eleanor Barrand at [events@rsb.org.uk](mailto:events@rsb.org.uk) or on 020 3925 3444.

## [Parliamentary Links Day 2022](#)

28 June 2022

09:00 – 12:30 BST

Houses of Parliament, London

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. The theme for this year's event is Science and International Collaboration.

## [The 6th Black Minority and Ethnic Early Career Researcher Hybrid conference](#)

7 July 2022

08:30 – 18:00 BST

University of West London, Ealing, London

This event is free to attend, and both online and in-person admission is available. By attending the conference, you will have the opportunity to hear how Black and Minority Ethnic academics have navigated their journey, network, get a mentor and empower yourself through the workshops. The Royal Society of Biology is supporting this event.

And finally...

### [How predators get past the trickiest of defences](#)

Many clever species are undeterred by porcupine quills, venomous snake fangs, sticky-armed octopuses, and more, says National Geographic.

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