

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

8 April 2022

Dear readers, the newsletter team will be taking a spring break before returning with the next edition on 6th May 2022. In the meantime, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your readership.

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

##### [RSB responds to the draft UKRI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategy consultation](#)

In response to the [consultation](#), the RSB has written a letter to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) chief executive Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser FRSB. The letter presents the Society's comments and recommendations on UKRI's ambition and strategic objectives set out in the draft EDI strategy. The Society encouraged UKRI to adopt a bold EDI strategy with transparent, realistic and achievable outputs that will have an impact at systemic and individual levels addressing sector-wide EDI concerns.

##### [RSB to participate in four day working week trial](#)

The Royal Society of Biology has opted into a new scheme to trial a four day working week for its staff.

#### Health and biomedicine

##### [Alzheimer's disease research takes 'major leap forward'](#)

More than 40 genes have been linked to Alzheimer's disease for the first time, in a 'landmark' study offering hope for better diagnosis and treatment, reports BBC News.

##### [First complete gap-free human genome sequence published](#)

More than 20 years after the milestone of the first draft, missing sections of the sequence have been completed, writes the Guardian.

##### [New review launched into vitamin D intake to help tackle health disparities](#)

According to this Government news story, a new review has been launched to promote the importance of vitamin D and identify ways to improve intake across the population.

#### Food and drink

##### [New calorie labelling rules come into force to improve nation's health](#)

According to this Government press release, the new legislation applies to large businesses such as takeaways, restaurants and cafes.

## Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

### [Defra to hold crisis meeting to tackle impact of fertiliser costs on food prices](#)

The UK Government is to host a crisis planning meeting with farmers about rocketing fertiliser prices, reports the Guardian.

### [New Scottish-caught seafood added to 'fish-to-avoid' list](#)

A range of seafood caught off the Scottish coast has been added to a 'fish-to-avoid' list compiled by conservationists, says BBC News.

### [Rolling wildflower blocks: benefits for biodiversity](#)

The British Ecological Society covers how rolling wildflower blocks can be a more effective measurement against insect decline than flower strips in agricultural landscapes.

## Environment and ecology

### [Astounding UK nature recovery observed for the first time from space](#)

The Zoological Society of London's conservation scientists have led ground-breaking research using satellites to understand the impacts of rewilding efforts over two decades, at a famous UK site.

### [Plant health summit aims to boost food security, safeguard human health](#)

United Nations News covers how the world's plant protection body recently met, aiming to set new plant health standards to both safeguard human wellbeing and preserve food security.

### [Climate change has caused Britain's butterflies to get bigger](#)

In response to a warming world, many species are physically changing their body sizes, reports the Natural History Museum.

## Water and air

### [Sewage: Urgent plan to stop discharges into rivers and sea](#)

The environment secretary has said the UK Government is taking urgent action to reduce sewage discharges into rivers and the sea in England, reports BBC News.

### [Almost everyone now breathing polluted air, warns WHO](#)

United Nations (UN) News covers how 99 per cent of the world's population breathes polluted air that exceeds internationally approved limits, according to UN medical scientists.

## Climate and energy

### [Met Office to increase heatwave thresholds across parts of England](#)

The Guardian covers how the thresholds are being raised in eight counties as average temperatures rise due to global heating.

### [IPCC's starkest message yet: extreme steps needed to avert climate disaster](#)

Nature News examines how scientists have warned that radical emission cuts combined with some atmospheric carbon removal are the only hope to limit global warming to 1.5 °C.

### [Adventurous ideas to make net zero a reality](#)

The projects are designed to support the development of disruptive, adventurous ideas for new materials, devices, fuels and technologies, says UK Research and Innovation.

## Waste

### [Businesses face clean-up costs for dumped rubbish](#)

Companies will face clean-up costs if their packaging is littered, under new rules being introduced, according to BBC News.

### [Members of the public encouraged to take part in The Big Plastic Count](#)

The Natural History Museum covers how the UK is one of the biggest producers of plastic waste in the world, coming in second only to the USA. In a bid to get a better grip on exactly what and how much plastic is being thrown away by people in the UK, The Big Plastic Count is encouraging members of the public to record every single piece of plastic they use and throw away over one week.

## Animal research

### [UK Government backs key BBSRC animal welfare programme](#)

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will co-fund a research network, for the first time, underlining animal welfare as a high Government priority, reports UK Research and Innovation.

### [Jaw DNA and advanced sensors to pull sharks out of hot water](#)

Horizon covers how shark numbers have plummeted by an alarming 70% over the past 50 years, and many are endangered. Researchers are therefore employing new methods to improve knowledge of sharks, including the use of genomic techniques that can help uncover their genetic history.

## Research funding and higher education policy

### [Thousands more global study and work opportunities for UK students](#)

According to this Government press release, bids have opened for the second year of the Turing Scheme, as UK students travelled to over 100 countries across the globe since the scheme launched last year.

### [Opinion: Redefining research collaboration in Scotland](#)

Writing for Wonkhe, Cat Ball, assistant director of research and innovation, Scottish Funding Council, explains how alliances for research challenges (ARCs) can help expand access to research funding.

### [Fewer early career researchers heading to UK from European Union](#)

According to the latest data on staff working in UK universities, the share who were EU citizens fell for the first time in 2020-21 after at least 15 years of growth, reports Times Higher Education.

## Schools education policy

### [Strong signs of recovery across education, but challenges remain](#)

This Government press release covers how Ofsted has published the second set of reports in a series looking at the pandemic's continued impact on education providers.

### [National Tutoring Programme simplified to reach as many pupils as possible](#)

The Government has stated that plans have been set out for the next year of the National Tutoring Programme, where schools will receive funding directly to help reach pupils most in need of support.

### [Opinion: Eight tips for reaching underrepresented children in schools](#)

The British Science Association spoke to Monique Darrell, science lead and year five teacher, Goose Green Primary School, to find out what strategies the school is using to ensure their pupils feel included and how they are celebrating diversity within their science lessons.

## Business and industry

### [Opinion: Women's full participation in renewables is essential for a fair and green future](#)

The transition to energy security and climate-neutrality means we need to close the gender gap to fully involve women in a technical, scientific and business transformation, writes Horizon.

### [Opinion: Let's Support Deep Tech Innovators](#)

Writing for the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE), Jo Reynolds, director of science and communities, Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), explores the RSC's new summary report looking to unlock the potential of deep tech SMEs.

## Diversity and inclusion

### [UN chief calls for greater inclusion, marking World Autism Awareness Day](#)

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has highlighted the need for greater support for people with autism, particularly at the community-level, writes United Nations News.

### [Sensory nature walks launched by Westonbirt Arboretum](#)

An arboretum is launching a series of walks put together by blind guides to encourage people to enjoy nature using all of their senses, reports BBC News.

### [Opinion: Why we need to talk about fertility in higher education](#)

Samantha Wilkinson, senior lecturer in childhood and youth studies, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Lydia Dye-Stonebridge, former policy manager, give their perspective on how higher education can struggle to support those going through fertility concerns and fertility treatments.

## Outreach and engagement

### [Rivercraft: Minecraft game inspires young environmental champions](#)

According to the Government press release, children and young people across the world can learn more about climate change, the environment, and reducing the impacts of flooding thanks to a new game.

### [Citizen Science - science by and for the people](#)

Through citizen science, ordinary people can take part in extraordinary research, writes Horizon.

### [Tomorrow's climate scientists from Corbridge Middle School investigate ways to prevent urban flooding](#)

Writing for the Royal Society, teachers Meryl Batchelder and Mark Swinney from Corbridge Middle School share their Tomorrow's Climate Scientists project in which students are studying the impact of heavy rainfall events.

## International news

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

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

### [France set to choose its next president — researchers share their hopes](#)

Scientists say that exploring other worlds and blue-skies research should be among the next president's priorities, reports Nature News.

### [Extreme citizen science gives a voice to the marginalised in remote communities](#)

Forest communities are guardians of biodiversity. Now they can contribute their knowledge to scientific projects designed to protect ecosystems by inputting data into tailor-made systems, writes Horizon.

### [Cautious optimism for trials of mRNA-based HIV vaccine](#)

Scientists urge African leaders to demand fair licensing following clinical trials of an HIV vaccine candidate, according to SciDev.Net.

## People

### [Plant disease expert honoured by her peers](#)

Rothamsted's Dr Kim Hammond-Kosack has been awarded the inaugural Tony Trinci Award by the Microbiology Society and the British Mycological Society.

### [Bees' Needs Awards Winners announced](#)

According to this Government news story, the awards recognise and celebrate examples of exemplary initiatives undertaken by local authorities, community groups, farmers, and businesses to support pollinators.

## Opportunities

### [Editor-in-Chief of Environmental Microbiology and Environmental Microbiology Reports Vacancy](#)

The Society for Applied Microbiology and Wiley invite applications for the role of Editor-in-Chief of EMI and EMIR. The candidate should be an active researcher and be able to demonstrate their impact in their field.

**Closes: 20 April 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: 16 May 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

### [2030 Strategic framework for international climate and nature action](#)

Defra is seeking views on how the UK can encourage international climate and nature action over the next decade.

**Closes: 17 April 2022**

### [Higher education policy statement and reform](#)

The Department for Education is seeking views on proposals to improve outcomes, access and value for money of investment in higher education by students and taxpayers.

**Closes: 6 May 2022**

### [The design of the UK's future research assessment system](#)

As part of the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP), the four funding bodies (Research England, Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland) are seeking views on the design of the UK's future research assessment system. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk) for more information and if you would like to contribute.

**Closes: 6 May 2022**

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

Defra is seeking views on the first suite of Environment Act 2021 targets. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk) for more information and if you would like to contribute.

**Closes: 11 May 2022**

### [Nature recovery green paper](#)

Defra wants to know what you think about its initial policy proposals regarding protected sites and species.

**Closes: 11 May 2022**

### [Vitamin D](#)

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is seeking views on how to improve the vitamin D status of the population in England.

**Closes: 15 May 2022**

### [New Deal for Postgraduate Research](#)

The New Deal for Postgraduate Research is a long-term piece of work that aims to improve the experience and quality of postgraduate research training in the UK. In this engagement exercise, UK Research and Innovation is focusing primarily on doctoral training (for example, working towards a PhD), but also welcomes comments on other research-focused training and qualifications.

**Closes: 17 May 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

### [JPAG / Royal Society of Biology Symposium: Antibody Drug Conjugates Revisited](#)

**12 May 2022**

**13:00 – 15:40 BST**

The Royal Society of Biology and the Joint Pharmaceutical Analysis Group host an online symposium discussing the issues and challenges associated with antibody drug conjugates.

### [Standing up for Science Workshop](#)

20 May 2022

Norwich Research Park, Norwich

Join Sense about Science to find out how to contribute research findings to public discussions and engage effectively with journalists and policymakers. Apply for your free place by 18th April 2022 at 17:00.

### [Parliamentary Links Day 2022](#)

28 June 2022

Houses of Parliament, London

9:00 – 12:30 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.

And finally...

### [Birds are officially more colourful closer to the equator](#)

New research has found that, for one group of birds at least, the tropical counterparts are measurably more colourful than their polar relatives, writes the Natural History Museum.

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