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## News

### RSB news

#### RSB's response to the 2025 Spending Review

The Chancellor presented the 2025 Spending Review, setting out departmental budgets until 2029, and investment spending plans until 2030. These announcements were preceded by a welcome promise to support research and innovation with a four-year £86bn funding package, starting from April 2026.

#### RSB AGM 2025 sees over 400 members in attendance

This year, the RSB's Annual General Meeting took place on Wednesday 21 May 2025 at the Geological Society at Burlington House, London as well as online. Among the highlights were updates provided by the RSB's Chief Executive, approval of the 2023-2024 finances, and this year's Charter Lecture.

#### Winner of Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year 2025 announced at HUBS

The Royal Society of Biology has announced this year's winner of the Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award: Dr Sobia Kauser, Associate Professor at the University of Bradford.

#### RSB Fellows elected to Learned Society of Wales

The Royal Society of Biology offers warm congratulations to four of its Fellows who have recently been elected as Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales (Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru).

### Plant health and biosecurity

#### New azole resistance mechanism identified in European Phoma stem canker fungus

Phoma stem canker, a major threat to oilseed rape yields internationally, may be becoming harder to control due to genetic changes which reduce fungicide effectiveness, reports Rothamsted Research.

#### Tiny insect plagues German crops, raising fears of wider spread

Euractiv reports that the reed leafhopper (*Pentastiridius leporinus*) is endangering key crops such as sugar beet and potatoes in Germany, and could soon pose a risk across Europe.

## **Fungal Protein Critical to Causing Fusarium Head Blight in Cereal Crops Revealed**

New insights into how the fungal pathogen *Fusarium graminearum* attacks crops could lead to the development of genetically engineered disease-resistant grains, reports Rothamsted Research.

## **Plant breeding**

### **Future-proofing agriculture: scientists look to biotechnology to improve crop resilience and nutritional value**

The John Innes Centre reports on a new project looking at how engineering biology technologies can be developed and used to help feed a growing population while protecting crops against climate change-related catastrophes and pests.

## **Agriculture**

### **Farmers to get fairer deals for combinable crops**

According to this government press release, arable farmers will benefit from a new government review tackling unfair practices in the combinable crops supply chain.

### **Smart Farming Analysis Reveals Hidden Trade-offs in Morocco's Olive Boom**

This Rothamsted Research article discusses the development of a new framework designed to help land managers and policymakers navigate the complex trade-offs in agricultural planning—particularly in water-scarce regions such as Morocco's semi-arid zones.

### **Warning over 'dirty secret' of toxic chemicals on farmers' fields**

BBC News reports on the potential risks from spreading sewage sludge containing toxic chemicals on farmers' fields.

### **'Too big to fit in your mouth': sunny spring delivers crop of 'giant' UK strawberries**

The Guardian reports that 'Perfect' weather conditions has led to berries that growers say are between 10% and 20% bigger than usual.

## **Food security**

### **UK must consider food and climate part of national security, say top ex-military figures**

The Guardian reports that former military leaders are urging the UK government to widen its definition of national security to include climate, food and energy measures in advance of a planned multibillion-pound boost in defence spending.

## **Biodiversity and conservation**

### **Historic Garden of England protected with new sparkling National Nature Reserve**

This government press release reports that a new National Nature Reserve covering 800 hectares has been announced.

### **Trial to control bracken brings benefits for the UK's most endangered butterfly**

The James Hutton Institute highlights a trial which aims to use livestock trampling as an alternative to herbicides for bracken management.

### **Research reveals best plant seed mixes for pollinators and people**

The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) reports on research which has identified the best plants to include in annual flowering displays to attract bees and hoverflies.

### **New portal makes millions of specimens freely accessible to the world**

Kew Science has announced the launch of its new online Data Portal, which will contain information on 7.5 million herbarium and fungarium specimens.

### **Can plants hear their pollinators?**

This Science Daily article highlights research suggesting that pollinator buzzing sounds lead plants to increase their nectar production.

### **Rare orchid returns from brink of extinction**

BBC News reports that a project to bring back one of the UK's rarest wildflowers, the lady's slipper orchid, has shown its first signs of success.

## **Forestry**

### **New resource to help local authorities measure the social and cultural value of trees**

Forest Research reports on the development of a new resource to help local authorities effectively measure the social and cultural values of trees in their area.

### **Multiple threats to woodlands require tailored solutions**

A study from UKCEH suggests that UK woodlands are increasingly under threat from changes in land management, climate, diseases and deer populations – and vegetation is responding differently, requiring tailored action to protect biodiversity.

### **New research on public access to woodlands released**

Forest Research has published new research which updates 10-year-old data on public access to trees and woodlands and provides maps showing the distribution of accessible woodlands.

## **Business and industry**

### **Fruit and veg import checks scrapped ahead of UK-EU deal**

According to this government press release, the government will scrap border checks on fruit and veg imported from the European Union in an early move to ease trade ahead of its new SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary) deal with the EU.

## **Sustainability**

### **Vanishing saltmarshes threaten climate progress but recovery is within reach**

UKCEH highlights a report suggesting that the world's saltmarshes are disappearing three times faster than forests, threatening global progress on climate change goals.

## Opportunities

### Plant Health Professional Register

Those working in plant health are encouraged to apply for the RSB's [Plant Health Professional Register](#), which was created in partnership with Defra to recognise individuals with skills and experience that align with the current [Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain](#). You are also invited to join our [Plant Health Professionals LinkedIn network](#) where you can explore and share job opportunities, events and more.

### Introduction to Programming for Biologists Using Python

Want to learn coding but unsure where to begin? Through short tutorials and practical exercises, this one-day course will introduce you to the basics and practical applications of Python. Biologists at all career stages are encouraged to attend, and no coding experience is needed or assumed. [Visit the event webpage](#) for full details and to book your place on this course. If you have any questions, please email [training@rsb.org.uk](mailto:training@rsb.org.uk).

### RSB Outreach and Engagement Grants

The Royal Society of Biology is now offering members grants of up to £1,000 to help create and run a citizen science survey, activity or project. Whether you are interested in a specific species, local ecology, animal behaviour or plant growth rates and the impacts of climate change. Work out how you can turn your science question into a simple study. It needs to be open to anyone to take part in, to help you collect the data you need to answer your science question. Apply for a grant **until 6 July**.

### Apprentice of the Year Award

The RSB is running its Apprentice of the Year award for the 6th consecutive year. The award has been set up to celebrate and recognise apprentices' contributions to their teams and the wider bioscience community. The award also forms part of the RSB's [Technician Action Plan](#) to support the Technician Commitment. Please email your award application to [registers@rsb.org.uk](mailto:registers@rsb.org.uk) by 17:00 (BST) 8 July.

### RSB Regional Events Grants

The RSB is offering members grants of up to £1,000 to help create inspiring events or activities that celebrate the biosciences and engage diverse audiences. Whether you are planning a biology workshop, talk series, or community project, these grants can help bring your vision to life. [Apply for a grant via mySociety](#) by Sunday 6 July.

## Consultations

### Resilience to threats from animal disease

The Public Accounts Committee has launched an inquiry into the Resilience to threats from animal disease in England. The committee is welcoming evidence on topics including the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) ability to establish and manage the structures, systems and governance processes needed to ensure England's resilience to animal diseases. The RSB is currently considering a response to this inquiry. Please contact [consultation@rsb.org.uk](mailto:consultation@rsb.org.uk) for more information and if you would like to contribute.

**Closes: 7 July 2025**

### **Improving the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain for minor, medium and brownfield development**

Defra has launched a consultation about the implementation of biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor, medium and brownfield development, including options around extending exemptions, simplifying the small sites metric and increasing ease of access to the off-site market.

**Closes: 24 July 2025**

### **Higher Education and Funding: Threat of Insolvency and International Students**

The Education Committee intends to undertake a series of mini-inquiries, each focused on one or two themes relating to higher education. This will enable the Committee to flexibly respond to policy developments in the higher education sector. This first mini-inquiry focuses on the urgent issues of the threat of insolvency in the higher education sector and international students.

**Closes: 31 July 2025**

### **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**

### **Halting biodiversity decline in agriculture**

**1 July 2025**

**11:30 – 13:00**

**Online (Zoom)**

This webinar will explore how science can play a pivotal role in combating biodiversity loss in agriculture and shaping policy recommendations. This event is open to all and is relevant to those with an interest in natural capital, land management, and the relationships between agricultural production and biodiversity loss.

### **The 9th BME Early Career Researcher's Conference**

**4 July 2025**

**10:00 – 16:30**

**Sibson Building, University of Kent, Park Wood Road, Canterbury CT2 7FS**

The 9th BME ECR will be a hybrid conference taking place at the University of Kent in collaboration with the University of West London. The conference will offer an enriching experience filled with valuable insights from academic leaders, interactive workshops and engaging panel discussions designed to empower and inspire.

## And finally...

### Thousands of endangered trees preserved for centuries inside Chinese temples

Religious monuments in China have provided a refuge for ancient trees for thousands of years, including dozens of endangered species and some that are extinct in the wild, reports Nature News.



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