

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

13 February 2019

News

Top stories

[Plummeting insect numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'](#)

Exclusive: Insects could vanish within a century at current rate of decline, says global review

[Global insect decline may see 'plague of pests'](#)

Health and biomedicine

[Most biomedical studies fail to report if results differ by sex](#)

Gender bias concern as analysis shows differences in how sexes respond to drugs overlooked

[Pill inspired by leopard tortoise could replace diabetic injections](#)

Capsule shape based on domed shell ensures insulin needle within aims at stomach wall

['Diet drugs' suppress mosquitoes' thirst for blood](#)

Method shows promise for disease control, but practical hurdles remain.

[Children's Mental Health: Understanding the issues](#)

[We're not lazy, we just need more sleep, say pupils](#)

[Breast cancer: Scan younger women at risk, charity says](#)

Food and drink

[Sizzling interest in lab-grown meat belies lack of basic research](#)

'Clean meat' firms have drawn tens of millions of dollars in investment in recent years, but technical hurdles remain.

[Funding for food industry](#)

£6 million awarded to local food processors.

[Showcasing food and drink](#)

First Minister promotes Scotland's natural larder in Canada.

[Failure to tackle link between meat and cancer a 'dereliction of duty' by government, says top scientist](#)

Agriculture and fisheries

[FAWC opinion on the welfare of cattle kept for beef production](#)

Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) opinion on the welfare of cattle kept for beef production.

[Scientists find some fish can 'recognise themselves' in mirror](#)

Wrasse passes intelligence test in disputed study, challenging 'vacant' reputation of fish

[On rooftops and in tunnels, city farms lead food revolution](#)

Salad plants are already being grown in old bomb shelters but floating dairy farms and 16-storey food towers could be next

Environment and ecology

[Environment in multiple crises – report](#)

[Global research hubs tackle world's environmental challenges](#)

UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) is pioneering an ambitious new approach to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges through a £200 million investment across 12 global research hubs, announced today.

[Newly protected sites safeguard fabulous fungi](#)

Natural England announces the notification of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) to protect fungi in Dorset and Halesowen

[The killing of large species is pushing them towards extinction, study finds](#)

Intentional and unintentional trapping, poaching and slaughter of megafauna is the single biggest factor in their decline

[Climate change: 'Future proofing' forests to protect orangutans](#)

[Dogs' becoming major threat' to wildlife](#)

Water and air

[Tainted water: the scientists tracing thousands of fluorinated chemicals in our environment](#)

Researchers are struggling to assess the dangers of nondegradable compounds used in clothes, foams and food wrappings.

[New system launched to maintain environmental standards on harmful gases in No Deal Brexit scenario](#)

New system launched today to maintain EU restrictions on F gases and Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) in the event of a No Deal Brexit.

Climate and energy

[Pupils' climate change strike threat poses dilemma for heads](#)

Thousands of pupils set to be absent on 15 February, putting schools on the spot

[Saltire Tidal Energy Challenge Fund](#)

Up to £10 million to help commercial deployment of tidal projects.

[Climate change: UK carbon capture project begins](#)

[Climate change: World heading for warmest decade, says Met Office](#)

[2019 Christ's College Climate Seminars](#)

The Centre for Science and Policy worked with Professor Charles Kennel, Director Emeritus at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego, to deliver the 2019 series of climate change seminars hosted by Christ's College.

Waste

[Plastics are being glued together in the ocean](#)

Research funding and higher education policy

[Chris Skidmore: don't put a lid on university access](#)

In first major policy interview, English minister tells THE he opposes minimum grade thresholds for university entry and does not believe there is a 'creeping culture of censorship' on campus

[UK universities told to ignore net migration target](#)

Chair of Migration Advisory Committee says target no longer influences policy on student migration

[Research England selects Knowledge Exchange Framework pilot group](#)

[NERC invests £2.2 million in CDTs focused on renewable energy](#)

Two new Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT), with a focus on renewable energy, are among 75 announced today by UK Research & Innovation.

[A Decade of Research and Innovation: BBSRC to celebrate UK-Brazil partnership at FAPESP Week London](#)

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research (BBSRC) Council, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), is delighted to be joining the Sao Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) to celebrate FAPESP Week London, part of the UK-Brazil Year of Science and Innovation 2018-2019.

[Unlocking cycles of poverty with £4.1 million investment in industrial biotechnology](#)

From preventing kidney disease to producing mosquito repellent, BBSRC is awarding £4.1 million to three projects seeking to sustainably improve human and animal health using industrial biotechnology.

[Biotech fundraising is cause for celebration but is the City listening?](#)

Dr Martin Turner, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the BioIndustry Association, on a fantastic year for investment in the UK life science ecosystem.

[Leading UK universities going backwards on state school access](#)

Durham, Imperial College and St Andrews all had a smaller share of first years from state schools in 2017-18 than Cambridge

[Scholarships' effect on social mobility is keenly felt in the Commonwealth](#)

They can break down the financial and geographical barriers to higher education, advancing universities' purpose to serve the common good, says Joanna Newman

[Two universities, addressing 21st-century challenges together](#)

Chris Husbands explains how his institution's strategic partnership with La Trobe University in Australia will address a global future while remaining firmly rooted in its community

Schools education policy

[The complexities of timetabling science lessons in secondary schools](#)

[Overhaul England's 'narrow' A-levels, says top scientist](#)

[Replace GCSEs with baccalaureate, says Conservative MP](#)

Radical proposal to overhaul exams would allow greater focus on vocational skills

[Improved access to thousands more world class school places](#)

More disadvantaged children will have access to an Outstanding school place as the government launches the second round of the Selective Schools Expansion Fund.

Diversity and inclusion

[Goodbye \[Royal Society\] Diversity Committee](#)

[What's it like to be a woman in science at Imperial's Faculty of Medicine?](#)

Imperial scientists reflect on gender equality in the scientific community, challenging stereotypes and female scientists who have inspired them.

[Minister calls to dispel girls' misconceptions of STEM subjects](#)

Girls are substantially less likely than boys to consider taking Science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects at A Level

[Girls just wanna do maths - and the women who help them](#)

Project aims to boost pupils' confidence and tackle gender imbalance in Stem professions

[Supporting female ecologists to find their paths to success](#)

Isabella Mandl and Manuela Gonzalez-Suarez were paired together in the BES Women in Ecology mentoring scheme.

[We all need to take responsibility for racial inequalities in higher education](#)

International news

[UK PACT's first project in Colombia will improve energy access](#)

The project aims to unlock funds for providing sustainable energy access and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Colombia.

[No silver bullet for arsenic in groundwater](#)

[Australia launches largest-ever rewilding project](#)

[Landmark Australian ruling rejects coal mine over global warming](#)

The case is the first time a mine has been refused in the country because of climate change.

[Tropical Africa could be a key to solving methane mystery](#)

Project analyses wetlands' contribution to a spike in atmospheric concentrations of the potent greenhouse gas.

[Thousands of scientists run up against Elsevier's paywall](#)

Researchers have been left without access to new papers as libraries and the major publisher fail to agree on subscription deals.

[Zanzibar cuts new malaria cases by 94 per cent](#)

[West Nile Virus spotted in Pakistan](#)

[A toxic crisis in America's coal country](#)

[Scientists kick the tyres on Trump's plan to tackle HIV](#)

Curbing the disease in the United States is a worthy goal, researchers say, but many worry that administration policies will make it impossible to achieve.

[Bid to use AI to predict research reproducibility launched](#)

US government funding \$7.6 million (£5.9 million) project designed to give policymakers a quick indication of reproducibility

Opinion

[Creative, egalitarian, carbon-neutral – the future of industry?](#)

[How to have REF-able policy impact](#)

[Will future immigration policy support research and innovation?](#)

James Tooze reflects on a big few months for UK immigration policy

[Vision and creativity as teaching excellence metrics](#)

[Culturing better tea research](#)

International efforts to enhance the quality of tea are falling short of their potential — mainly because of the way that research is conducted in countries that dominate tea production.

[How to use Twitter to further your research career](#)

The social-media platform is often a tool for procrastination, says Jet-Sing M. Lee. But what else can it be?

['The sooner you go home the better': is this the UK's message to international students?](#)

The University of the Arts London's vice-chancellor and the leader of Australia's University of Wollongong discuss why UK immigration policy is deterring international students

[London-centric policymaking 'behind Erasmus uncertainty'](#)

Bergen rector says UK's failure to commit to European student mobility overlooks importance of ties between Britain's north and Norway

Other

[Equine flu: racing will not resume until 13 February at earliest – as it happened](#)

The Festival meeting at Cheltenham is looming next month and many valuable trials for those races are scheduled over the next two weeks

[New international partnerships on antimicrobial resistance, climate change and soil security](#)

New international collaborations to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the environment, prepare for health risks posed by climate change and ensure healthy soils for food security are part of world-leading international research announced today.

[Data for international development: lessons from a scientist in government](#)

[Major presence for UK at world's largest general science meeting](#)

[Politics in the language of uncertainty](#)

People

[Professor Dame Sally Davies to step down as Chief Medical Officer](#)

Dame Sally will step down as the Chief Medical Officer at the end of September this year.

[Heather Hancock reappointed as Chair of the FSA Board](#)

Heather Hancock will remain Chair of the Food Standard Agency's (FSA) Board for a further three years. The reappointment, made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, will run until the end of March 2022.

Opportunities

[Vacancy: Science Policy Officer](#)

Royal Society of Biology (RSB)

£25,000-£28,000 (dependent on experience)

Location: Central London (WC1N)

Closing date: 3 March 2019

An exciting role: working as part of a team the Science Policy Officer will be responsible for providing specialist input and delivering a portfolio of activities with focus on policy in research funding and infrastructure across the biosciences, including policy and principles relating to research integrity, research publication and communication, and inclusivity and widening participation in research and research policy. The Science Policy Officer will also be responsible for provision of specialist input and delivery of related education policy projects and consultation responses.

[Apply online with a CV and covering letter.](#)

Please direct any queries to Dr Laura Marshall, Science Policy Manager, at laura.marshall@rsb.org.uk or 020 7685 2567

[RSB at Festival of Science and Curiosity in Nottingham](#)

The Royal Society of Biology is proud to be part of this year's [Nottingham Festival of Science and Curiosity](#). If you are in the city during the festival you'll find us using hands-on science activities to explain how your lifestyle choices can affect how your genes work; and giving visitors an opportunity to identify some of the bones on a replica human skeleton. We will be at intu Broadmarsh on 16th February 2019, and 38 Carrington Street on 17th February 2019.

[Voice of the Future, Tuesday 12 March](#)

Would you like to ask MPs questions about science policy issues that matter to you?

[Voice of the Future](#) offers a unique opportunity for young scientists to do just that. If you've got a question register online by **Wednesday 13th February** or get in touch with [Danny Filer](#).

Watch a recording of the event on [Parliament TV](#), read our [news story](#) and view [twitter moments](#). Read a blog from a member of [The Nutrition Society](#).

[Announcement of Opportunity: UK Clean Air Champion](#)

UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) is inviting applications for the role of UK Clean Air Champion.

Closes: 14 February 2019

[Highlight topics - Fifth round](#)

NERC invites proposals for the fifth round of highlight topics, a route for funding strategic research. Highlight topics focus strategic research on defined subject areas, and will be delivered through independent projects.

Closes: 21 February 2019

[Sustainable Urban Development \(SME Competitiveness and Environment\): call in Leeds City Region](#)

Sustainable Urban Development call to run a project to support SME competitiveness and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency in Leeds City Region.

Closes: 22 February 2019

[Biology Challenge 2019](#)

The Biology Challenge 2019 (6th – 26th March) for students aged 13-15 is now open for registrations. The competition stimulates students' curiosity about the natural world and encourages them to take an interest in biology outside of school. High scoring students will receive certificates and be invited to an awards ceremony in London. Please contact [Raghav Selvam](#) with any enquiries.

Closes: 27 February 2019

[Royal Society of Biology travel grants](#)

Student and early-career members of the Royal Society of Biology can now apply for a travel grant of £500 to support future overseas travel to attend a biology-related project or conference. Learn new lab and field techniques, gain professional development skills, and network with international academics with the support of a travel grant. Please visit the Society's website for further information and to read reports from previous grant recipients.

Closes: 1 March 2019

[The BBSRC Impact Writing Competition 2019](#)

Are you aware of inspiring research, supported by BBSRC, making a real, tangible difference to people's lives?

Closes: 18 March 2019

Consultations

[Mental health of men and boys: inquiry launched](#)

The Women and Equalities Committee launches a new inquiry into the mental health of men and boys ahead of International Men's Day (Monday 20 November).

Closes: 18 February 2019

[Revising the rules for free allocation in the EU Emissions Trading System](#)

Closes: 22 February 2019

[Single use carrier bags: extending and increasing the charge](#)

Closes: 22 February 2019

[Deforestation and forest degradation – stepping up EU action](#)

Closes: 25 February 2019

[Tree and woodlands: introducing measures for felling street trees](#)

Closes: 28 February 2019

[Independent review of TEF: call for views](#)

The government is seeking views on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) to inform an independent review of the framework.

Closes: 1 March 2019

[Evaluation of the Eel Regulation](#)

Closes: 8 March 2019

[Improving our management of water in the environment](#)

Closes: 12 March 2019

[Knowledge Exchange Framework Consultation 2019](#)

Research England invites responses to its proposals for the first iteration of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), which aims to evaluate and benchmark the contribution that higher education institutions make to the exploitation of the knowledge they generate. The RSB response to this consultation is currently in draft. Please contact consultation@rsb.org.uk for more information and if you would like to contribute

Closes: 25 March 2019

[Evaluation of the Feed Additives Regulation](#)

Closes: 3 April 2019

[Evaluation of the European Fishery Statistics](#)

Closes: 12 April 2019

[The Scottish Government has opened a consultation introducing amendments to the Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#)

Closes: 26 April 2019

Events

[Valuing our Life Support Systems 2019 – Book your place now!](#)

21-22 May 2019

The Crystal, London

Book your place now for the Natural Capital Initiative's 10th anniversary summit at our early bird rates. The summit offers an independent platform for people in science, policy, NGOs, businesses and local communities to discuss and debate innovative natural capital solutions that enhance the environment and strengthen society.

And finally...

[The Hummingbird as Warrior: Evolution of a Fierce and Furious Beak](#)

Winsomely captured in poems and song, the birds are yielding new secrets about their astounding beaks and penchant for violence.

[The Biologist](#)

The latest issue of The Biologist looks at how [predatory bacteria could be used to help treat antibiotic-resistant infections](#), and [explores the extraordinary possibilities of genome recoding](#). RSB staff provide their view on [science T-levels](#) and [Plan S](#), and a former science advisor to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office explains how [science diplomacy](#) can build relations between nations where other channels fail. Members can download the full issue [here](#).

Royal Society of Biology
Science Policy Team
Charles Darwin House
12 Roger Street
London
WC1N 2JU
policy@rsb.org.uk

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Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU