

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

10 December 2019

News

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB Questionnaire: Publication policy, Open Access and You](#)

We are interested in your experience and views related to academic publication policies, and the transition to open access. Please fill out this survey to give your input, and help inform our work on this area. The survey should take around 20 minutes, and will be open for responses until 20 December 2019.

Interested in publication policy news?

Sign-up via [mySociety](#) to our Research Communication Newsletter for monthly policy news with a focus on research communication and dissemination.

[General Election 2019: RSB writes to party leaders and analyses manifestos of major parties](#)

The RSB has written to the leaders of eight parties about priorities for science and education in the next Parliament, and created summaries of their manifesto pledges relevant to the biosciences.

Health and biomedicine

[Bionic neurons could enable implants to restore failing brain circuits](#)

Scientists say creation could be used to circumvent nerve damage and help paralysed people regain movement

[Measles deaths 'staggering and tragic'](#)

['Bad cholesterol' levels should be checked from age of 25 - study](#)

Understanding risks early on could help protect from disease later in life and 'offer chance to take statins or adjust diet'

[Bug busters: The tech behind new vaccines](#)

[Deadly bugs found in nine out of ten makeup bags](#)

Food and drink

[Avocados with edible coating to go on sale in Europe for first time](#)

US technology allows fruits to stay ripe for twice as long and reduces plastic packaging

[We're turning to offbeat foods to survive a harsher climate](#)

Bambara groundnuts and weeds may not be at the top of most menus, but scientists hunting for wild cousins of modern crops may have found a solution for our future food needs.

Forestry

['Forgotten' elm tree set to make a comeback](#)

[I've seen mass tree-planting projects go awry around the world – UK politicians should take note](#)

Environment and ecology

[What's behind the decline in bees and other pollinators? \(infographic\)](#)

Find out what pollinators are, why they are important and why they are declining.

[MEPs call for a reduction in pesticides to protect bees](#)

Further reducing use of pesticides, more funds for research and better monitoring are urgently needed to save the EU's bees, says the Environment Committee.

[Underwater 'Ben Nevis' an important sponges habitat](#)

[Close Scottish grouse moors to help climate, report urges](#)

Intensively managed estates have created treeless landscapes with few animals and plants

Climate and energy

[Climate talks must chart an equitable path to net-zero emissions](#)

Madrid meeting will remain deadlocked unless developed countries accept responsibility for past emissions.

[Climate change: Last decade 'on course' to be warmest](#)

[EU and the Paris agreement: towards climate neutrality](#)

The EU will need to update its long-term climate goals in 2020. Parliament wants more ambitious goals, but will EU countries agree to aim for climate neutrality by 2050?

[Tackling degraded oceans could mitigate climate crisis - report](#)

Greenpeace says efforts to restore seas' ecosystems would boost their capacity to absorb heat and store carbon

[Climate change: Oceans running out of oxygen as temperatures rise](#)

[Don't pursue economic growth at expense of environment - report](#)

Europe's environmental watchdog gives warning as climate crisis continues

Waste

[Emissions from planes and ships: facts and figures \(infographic\)](#)

Greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation have more than doubled over the past two decades, while those from shipping have also increased. Check out our infographics.

[National greenhouse gas reporting needs an overhaul – it's time to directly measure the atmosphere](#)

[Global emissions to hit 36.8 billion tonnes, beating last year's record high](#)

[Why do ocean animals eat plastic?](#)

Whales with stomachs full of plastic have turned up around the world. Here's what we know.

Animal Research

[Genetically engineered animals offer fresh hope to heart valve patients](#)

Scientists have cloned a genetically engineered bull which they hope will help heart valve transplant patients lead better quality lives and benefit people with red meat allergies.

Government and Parliament

[What the United Kingdom's 'Brexit election' means for science](#)

Promises to raise research spending and take action on climate change overshadowed by scientists' fears about leaving the European Union.

Research funding and higher education policy

['The Netflixisation of academia': is this the end for university lectures?](#)

Universities are increasingly recording lectures, but academics are wary of being spied on or made obsolete

Open access and publication policy

[The journal publication system betrays the purpose of science](#)

Publishing articles in academic journals is a slow and difficult way to share new research discoveries. Alex Freeman decided to try to do something about it.

Diversity and inclusion

[The 'qualifications passport' scheme breaking down barriers for migrants](#)

Having their skills recognised is one of the main obstacles to employment faced by refugees in developed countries

[The university mental health charter is here](#)

Student Minds is delighted to introduce the University Mental Health Charter, co-created with hundreds of staff and students with one shared goal: to shape a future in which everyone in higher education can thrive.

['Mismatch' between grades and course 'bigger for poor students'](#)

Female students are also more likely than men to be 'undermatched' to courses with lower graduate earnings

[US entrepreneur sets up Oxford scholarship for black UK students](#)

Arlan Hamilton grant to cover costs for undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds

Ethics

[Crack down on genomic surveillance](#)

Corporations selling DNA-profiling technology are aiding human-rights abuses. Governments, legislators, researchers, reviewers and publishers must act.

[Human genetic enhancement might soon be possible – but where do we draw the line?](#)

Outreach and engagement

[To secure investment, science must tell its story better](#)

Digital technologies

[A picture is worth a thousand base pairs](#)

A small but powerful toolset makes sharing genomic data visualizations straightforward.

[Tigers, elephants and pangolins suffer as global wildlife trafficking soars](#)

Dozens of species are now at risk but a conference this week will showcase new technology that could help stop the illegal trade

[Cranky Uncle game takes on climate crisis denial and fake news](#)

App equips players with skills to identify misinformation in real world and online

International news

[Malaria cases are falling worldwide](#)

The trend is driven by progress tackling the disease in southeast Asia, but elsewhere infections remain 'unacceptably high'.

[WHO urges focus on pregnant women, children to wipe out malaria](#)

[Plastic pollution has killed half a million hermit crabs, study says](#)

[UK firms urge Brazil to stop Amazon deforestation for soy production](#)

Tesco and Asda are among 67 firms and investors who have written to President Bolsonaro

[Climate change is causing birds to shrink, study suggests](#)

Opinion

[Our climate is like reckless banking before the crash – it's time to talk about near-term collapse](#)

[Changing the tide](#)

[The perks of actively contributing to a society](#)

It's tempting to stay a 'silent member', but you might be missing out on conferences, collaborations and publications, says Elena Schneider-Futschik.

[Alcohol deaths in the UK – second highest since records began](#)

Other

[Explainable AI: ICO and The Alan Turing Institute open consultation on first piece of AI guidance](#)

[Robot era nears as machine conducts 100,000 experiments a year](#)

The dream of robot researchers is edging closer with automated laboratory producing five years of experiments in just two weeks, experts claim

People

[Peter Davis obituary](#)

Ornithologist and conservationist who dedicated much of his working life to saving the red kite

Opportunities

[UK-Canada Globalink Doctoral Exchange Scheme](#)

Closes: 12 December 2019

[School Biology Teacher of the Year Award](#)

Are you (or do you know) an amazing biology teacher? The Royal Society of Biology's School Biology Teacher of the Year Award aims to recognise outstanding and inspirational biology teachers.

Closes: 20 December 2019

[PULSE: Programme for Up and coming Life Sciences Entrepreneurs](#)

Closes: 31 December 2019

[Anniversary Gala Dinner](#)

Join us for the Royal Society of Biology's pinnacle 10 year anniversary event on 3 March 2020 at the Science Museum, London with special guest of honour Sir David Attenborough FRS Hon FRSB. Due to high demand, a limited number of extra tickets for RSB members and non-members will be released at 12:30pm on Wednesday 8 January 2020. A limited number of corporate tables are also available.

[British Biology Olympiad 2020](#)

The [British Biology Olympiad 2020](#) (31 January - 7 February) for post-16 students is now open for registration. The competition challenges and motivates students with an interest in biology, providing them with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. High scoring students will receive certificates and be invited to an awards ceremony in London. Please contact [Raghav Selvam](#) with any enquiries.

Closes: 24 January 2020

[Biology Challenge 2020](#)

The [Biology Challenge 2020](#) (10 - 31 March) for students aged 13 - 15 is now open for registration. The competition stimulates students' curiosity for 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: 28 February 2020

[£500 student & early-career member 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 in connection with biological study, teaching or research.

Closes: 1 March 2020

Events

[Athena Forum Prizes and Awards workshop](#)

31 March 2020

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

And finally...

[Dial-a-frog – researchers develop the 'FrogPhone' to remotely call frogs in the wild](#)

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