

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

14 February 2020

This newsletter provides links to published news articles, preserving the original title and summary line. 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

Top stories

[With science ‘held back by a gender gap’, Guterres calls for more empowerment for women and girls](#)

Fewer than 30 per cent of the world’s scientific researchers are women: that’s just one of the statistics showing how many challenges remain for women and girls in the scientific field, as the world marks the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, on Tuesday.

[Michelle Donelan named universities minister as science split off](#)

Chippenham MP appointed following sacking of Chris Skidmore

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB launches new award to recognise outstanding Apprentices](#)

The RSB has launched a new award to recognise outstanding apprentices, as part of their ten-year anniversary celebrations.

Health and biomedicine

[Global genomics project unravels cancer’s complexity at unprecedented scale](#)

A massive international effort has yielded multifaceted studies of more than 2,600 tumours from 38 tissues, generating a wealth of insights into the genetic basis of cancer.

[Carbon monoxide poisons thousands every year – and there are no good treatments](#)

[How coronavirus compares to flu, Ebola, and other major outbreaks](#)

Weighing diseases against each other is a complicated calculus. These charts explain why.

[Do drugs go off? What happens to medicines after their use-by dates](#)

Food and drink

[Scientists prove high fibre white loaf is possible](#)

Group identifies parts of the genome that control fibre content of white flour, raising hope that products will be in shops within five years

[Food security: What is it and how is it measured?](#)

[Organic food and drink sales rise to £2.45bn](#)

UK shoppers spend £200m a month, with strong growth online and for home delivery

Agriculture and fisheries

[Brexit: Is fishing the next big argument in the talks?](#)

[Fish and Chips - Tracking Salmon](#)

The Environment Agency is delighted to be involved in an independent, ground-breaking project tracking Atlantic salmon in the River Derwent, starting in April 2020.

Forestry

[Thousands of trees to be planted in England's towns and cities](#)

Government to support tree-planting schemes through £10m Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

[MPs question ministers on tree-planting plans](#)

Environment and ecology

[Climate change: Loss of bumblebees driven by 'climate chaos'](#)

[Bristol declares ecological emergency over loss of wildlife](#)

Mayor calls for urgent response to declines in birds, bees and mammals such as hedgehogs

[Q&A: To protect the Atlantic, we first need to understand it](#)

The Atlantic Ocean is under threat from fishing, fossil fuel extraction and deep-sea mining, and the onus should be on these industries to prove that their exploitation is sustainable rather than requiring scientists to come up with reasons to protect it, says Professor J Murray Roberts, a marine biologist at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

Water and air

[Push for bathing water quality hailed as 'game changer' for UK rivers](#)

Environment Agency boss calls for more funding to help public embrace wild swimming

['Invisible killer': UK government urged to tackle air pollution](#)

British Heart Foundation says 15m Britons are exposed to toxic levels of pollution

Climate and energy

[Boris Johnson promises urgent climate action after stinging criticism](#)

PM takes charge of COP 26 as ex-minister hits back at her sacking as president of talks

[Johnson urged to set out firm plans for UK's net-zero carbon target](#)

Campaigners call on PM to 'show UK is ready to do what it takes' before COP 26 summit

[Why some green policies can actually harm progress on climate change](#)

[EU urged to adopt meat tax to tackle climate emergency](#)

Levy would help offset impact of farming by raising price of steak in UK by 25%, says report

[Four things the UK government must do to phase out petrol, diesel and hybrid cars by 2035](#)

Government and Parliament

[Why the latest visa reforms are a step in the right direction](#)

The Government's new changes to the Tier 1 visa route, including a rebranding to 'Global Talent', is a strong first step in making the immigration system work for research. Here's why.

Research funding and higher education policy

[How universities can respond strategically to the climate emergency?](#)

Under growing pressure from students, many UK universities have declared a climate emergency, with several writing strategies for how their institution should tackle climate change.

[Continuous assessment 'may be more stressful' for students](#)

Transition away from end-of-course exams may also increase staff workloads, says report

[How stressed are postgraduate students?](#)

Postgraduate study can be a stressful time.

[Value people as well as papers to improve research culture](#)

Schools education policy

[Running a mile a day can make children healthier – here’s how schools can make it more fun](#)

[Using neuroscience to design education interventions: what have we learned?](#)

Open access and publication policy

[Nature will publish peer review reports as a trial](#)

Research involves deep discussions between authors and reviewers. Starting this week, readers of some Nature Research journals will be able to see this up close.

Business and industry

[How fungi can help create a green construction industry](#)

Diversity and inclusion

[Applicant gap between London and English regions becomes a gulf](#)

UK’s capital becomes first area of country to see more than half of 18-year-olds applying to higher education

Ethics

[Genomics: data sharing needs an international code of conduct](#)

Efforts to protect people’s privacy in a massive international cancer project offer lessons for data sharing.

Outreach and engagement

[Public to help shape exciting new range of research on the issues that impact their lives](#)

[Time to Talk: Young people bust mental health myths through art](#)

Measuring impact

[Universities don’t need shared metrics to measure their social value](#)

What is the value of a university? The debate isn’t new, but the current argument seems to be about what the best metric is to measure this value and then create a league table out of it.

International news

[Climate crisis: Antarctic continent posts record temperature reading of 18.3°C](#)

Fresh fears of accelerating damage to the planet’s ice sheets and sea level rise have been fuelled by confirmation from the UN’s weather agency that the Antarctic likely saw a new temperature record of more than 18°C on Thursday.

[Fireflies face extinction risk - and tourists are partly to blame](#)

Opinion

[Do Scotland's farmers have a problem with climate change?](#)

People

[New Director for MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology at UCL](#)

[UKRI appoints Director for Commercialisation of Research](#)

[Becoming a healthcare student in my forties](#)

OfS commissioned research made recommendations for promoting greater gender balance in nursing and healthcare courses. Rupert Maclaren, a student in diagnostic radiography tells his story.

Opportunities

[Bat Conservation Trust Woodland Symposium Student Bursaries](#)

Closes: 20 February 2020

[Education Policy Assistant \(0.4 FTE, 2.5 year fixed term\)](#)

The Royal Society of Biology is seeking a part time Education Policy Assistant to provide administrative support for a coordinated and collaborative approach to education policy. This position involves working closely with the Association for Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society and Royal Society of Chemistry on policy areas covering primary and secondary education in the sciences. For more information and to apply, visit [mySociety](#).

Closes: 25 February 2020

[RSB Anniversary Fundraising Raffle](#)

Prizes include a VIP safari tour, guided tour of the Houses of Parliament, London Symphony Orchestra concert tickets, behind the scenes viewing of the ITV news, a hands-on beekeeping course... and many more! Be in with the chance of winning whilst supporting the biosciences community: enter online at [rsb.org.uk/raffle](#).

Closes: 25 February 2020

[Helping farmers to work more efficiently: apply for funding](#)

Closes: 26 February 2020

[RSB Big Biology Day Grant 2020](#)

Are you interested in hosting a one-day science outreach festival to share your passion for biology and the natural world? Apply for the Royal Society of Biology's [Big Biology Day Grant 2020](#) and get up to £500 to host your own Big Biology Day!

Closes: 28 February 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

Communicating Your Science Workshop

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

International 3Rs prize

Closes: 6 March 2020

Genetics Society Summer Studentships

Closes: 31 March 2020

Developing sustainable plastic packaging: apply for funding

Closes: 1 April 2020

Learned Society Curation Awards

Closes: 20 April 2020

Consultations

Guidance for research organisations on how to implement the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

Closes: 24 February 2020

Initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook 2020: inspecting the quality of teacher education

Closes: 3 April 2020

Events

“AI For Wheat” Workshop

9 March 2020

Alan Turing Institute, London

HUBS Learning & Teaching Workshop Series 2020: Re-imagining the first-year student experience

20 March 2020

University of Warwick, Coventry

HUBS Learning & Teaching Workshop Series 2020: Enhancing Teaching and Learning Partnerships

26 March 2020

The University of Reading, Berkshire

Athena Forum Prizes and Awards workshop

31 March 2020

Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

HUBS Annual Meeting 2020

20 - 21 April 2020

Francis Crick Institute, London

European Pond Conservation Network conference 2020

18 - 22 May 2020

University College London, London

And finally...

Jackass penguin call shares traits of human speech, scientists say

Researchers analysed 590 recordings taken in Italian zoos of birds' distinctive sound

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