

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

20 November 2020

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

Top stories

[PM outlines his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution for 250,000 jobs](#)

Prime Minister Boris Johnson outlines his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution for 250,000 jobs.

[New national parks and thousands of green jobs under plans to build back greener](#)

The Government recently announced the new measures apart of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan to kick-start a green economic recovery, alongside greater protections for England's iconic landscapes and the creation of new national parks.

Royal Society of Biology news

An opportunity not to be missed..

[Policy Lates: Climate crisis - biosciences for a state of emergency](#)

23 November 2020

18:30 – 20:30 GMT

In the build-up to COP26, this Policy Lates event will explore the role for biosciences in reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and planning for a projected minimum rise in global temperature of 2°C, from several perspectives.

[Education during COVID-19](#)

An RSB webpage listing advice, resources and announcements for schools, students and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[COVID-19 Bulletin](#)

For further detail on COVID-19 research, news and updates, RSB has developed a monthly bulletin collating some of the bioscience behind the outbreak and response. The latest edition, published on the 26th of October 2020, covers updates including on aerosols and facemasks, virus survival in indoor environments, at risk groups, reinfection, second wave responses, vaccine and treatment progress, researching long-term COVID-19 effects, tackling misinformation, the impact of the pandemic on mental health and research field work, and Queen's Birthday Honours for services to COVID-19 research. See [our webpages](#) to read previous editions and subscribe to the next.

[Main RSB webpage on COVID-19](#)

The RSB is working to adapt and ensure our services are delivered to the greatest extent possible whilst also taking into account Public Health England and Government advice during the pandemic. We regularly update [this webpage](#) with relevant information about our activities, initiatives and community support.

Health and biomedicine

[Diabetes increasing COVID risks, showing need to strengthen health systems](#)

As the number of people with diabetes surges, many are at 'increased risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19', the UN chief said in his message for World Diabetes Day.

[The WHO is hunting for the coronavirus's origins. Here are the new details](#)

National Geographic provides an update on the World Health Organisation's global study on the origins of SARS-CoV-2.

[Drug-resistant infections: what we're doing now to tackle this slow-moving pandemic](#)

Tim Jinks, Head of Wellcome's Drug-resistant Infections Programme, explains the organisation's role in the global response to antimicrobial resistance.

[Scabies: the neglected tropical disease no one wants to talk about](#)

Writing for The Conversation, Michael Head, Senior Research Fellow in Global Health, University of Southampton, provides an overview of the tropical disease scabies which is caused by microscopic mites (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) that burrow under human skin and lay their eggs.

Food and drink

[Time to add some sunshine \(vitamin D\) to milk and bread](#)

Writing for The Conversation, Jeremy Howick, Director of the Oxford Empathy Programme, University of Oxford, summarises the health benefits of Vitamin D, in addition to highlighting methods to mitigate Vitamin D deficiency such as fortifying essential foods.

[New public consultation on total ban of online advertising for unhealthy foods](#)

A new consultation has been launched by the Government on proposals to ban online adverts for foods high in fat, sugar and salt in the UK to tackle the obesity crisis and get the nation fit and healthy.

Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

[Surf and turf](#)

With all types of food production under fire for their environmental credentials, experts from both aquaculture and agriculture have joined forces to say a solution lies in greater collaboration, says Rothamsted Research.

[A deep dive into Zero Hunger: farming the seas](#)

With the world population expected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050, food production will need to keep pace, and experts believe the ocean can provide much of the sustenance we need, according to the United Nations.

[Poultry farms are havens for wildlife](#)

Trees planted on poultry farms in the UK are providing considerable benefits for biodiversity as well as improving the health and welfare of free-range hens and providing a price premium for farmers, reports Poultry World.

Forestry

[ZSL report finds many palm-oil companies failing to meet 2020 zero-deforestation targets](#)

International conservation charity the Zoological Society of London is urging the palm oil industry to ramp up its reporting and take greater responsibility for its part in tackling the world's climate and biodiversity crises, as they release their annual assessment of 100 of the world's most significant palm oil producers, processors and traders.

[Government sets out world-leading new measures to protect rainforests](#)

The UK will go further than ever before to clamp down on illegal deforestation and protect rainforests, the Government has confirmed.

Environment and ecology

[One of the world's biggest sanctuaries for wildlife has just been created](#)

The most remote inhabited island in the world has become one of the biggest wildlife sanctuaries on the planet, reports the Natural History Museum.

[Why autumn is such a dangerous time for hedgehog mothers – and how to help them](#)

Writing for The Conversation, Lauren Moore, PhD Candidate in Road Ecology, Nottingham Trent University, highlights how roads are impacting hedgehog populations throughout Europe.

[Birds' genetic secrets revealed in global DNA study](#)

Scientists have sequenced and recorded the genomes of species from almost every branch of the bird family tree, reports the BBC.

[Green Deal: How MEPs wish to channel EU investment to sustainable activities](#)

The European Parliament has set out its proposals on how to best finance the Green Transition to sustainable, carbon-neutral economic activities.

Climate and energy

[Renewable energy: Could floating turbines power our homes?](#)

The BBC covers how experts believe wind turbines floating miles out to sea could one day provide electricity to our homes.

[Big UK offshore windfarms push risks harming habitats, say campaigners](#)

Fiona Harvey, Environment Correspondent for the Guardian writes green campaigners have warned offshore windfarms risk harming delicate landscapes and vulnerable wildlife habitats if the government fails to coordinate the planning system in its push for a big expansion of clean energy.

[Summit aims for clean-up of shipping industry](#)

Governments from around the world will soon try to reach agreement on a deal to clean up international shipping, reports the BBC.

Waste

[£22.5 million funding to turn industry waste into environmental wins](#)

Industries across the UK will be helped to tackle waste, boost recycling and build back greener from coronavirus thanks to £22.5 million of Government funding for 5 state-of-the-art research centres in London, Loughborough and Exeter.

[Zero emission energy from sewage project gets green light](#)

A project to convert sewage into a zero-emission fuel is set to go ahead in Wales, reports the BBC.

Government and Parliament

[UK government launches taskforce to support drive for 2 million green jobs by 2030](#)

The Government sets clear ambition to create green jobs, launching the new Green Jobs Taskforce to set the direction for the job market as we transition to a high-skill, low carbon economy.

Exiting the EU

[Nobel laureate urges Boris Johnson to commit to £80bn EU science scheme](#)

Venki Ramakrishnan, a Nobel prize winner and president of the Royal Society, has urged the Prime Minister to commit to the next seven years of the programme as a paying-in associate member to help secure his vision for the UK to be a 'global science superpower', writes Lisa O'Carroll, Brexit Correspondent for the Guardian.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Doctoral students advised to adjust projects for COVID-19](#)

UK Research and Innovation is strongly advising all funded students to speak to their supervisor about adjusting projects to complete a doctoral-level qualification within their funded period.

[PhD students fear they won't finish in time as UKRI curbs extensions](#)

The Guardian covers the opinions of students that have been left reeling after the UK's biggest funder of PhDs announced that thousands of researchers will not be given extra time or funding to complete their degrees.

[Williamson confirms plan to consider post-qualification admissions](#)

Education Secretary says use of predicted grades in the English system 'breeds low aspiration and unfairness', says Times Higher Education.

[30 creative teams awarded up to £100,000 each for Festival UK* 2022 R&D project](#)

A £3 million research and development programme gets underway, to progress open, original and optimistic ideas that could go on to become one of ten major creative projects, each designed to reach millions, bring people together and showcase the UK's creativity and innovation globally in 2022.

[Research in Covid-19 – ideas for resilience and response](#)

'A pandemic calls for bold ideas', in this opinion piece for Wonkhe, David Payne, Reader and Royal Society University Research Fellow at Imperial College London, returns to the idea of a universal basic research grant, and floats a national Covid research laboratory with the sole aim of defeating the virus.

[Major European research scheme gets €4-billion boost](#)

Last-minute budget increase still leaves the upcoming Horizon Europe programme billions short of campaigners' hopes, reports Nature News.

Schools education policy

[Learning loss: the National Tutoring Programme for England is a valuable step – but may not go far enough](#)

This article in The Conversation summarises the National Tutoring Programme - the UK Government's new flagship catch-up programme, available to state schools in England.

Business and industry

[Call for mission-focused 'collaboration zones' to boost UK R&D](#)

Vice-chancellors and business leaders urge tighter focus and fresh funding incentives to drive up industry-academia innovation, says Times Higher Education.

International news

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

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

[New species of monkey is already critically endangered](#)

A new species of monkey living on an extinct volcano in Myanmar has been described for the first time, reports the Natural History Museum.

[Wheat disease common to South America jumps to Africa](#)

A deadly wheat disease common to Asia and South America has been identified in Africa for the first time, raising fears of potential spread to wheat crops across the continent, reports SciDev.Net.

[Can an ambitious breeding effort save North America's ash trees?](#)

This article written for AAAS Science addresses how forest geneticist Jennifer Koch hopes her ash breeding strategy could save other threatened trees.

Other

[Zoo crisis deepens amidst second national lockdown and 'restrictive' bailout conditions](#)

With the financial impact of prolonged closure, zoos, safari parks and aquariums have had a lean 2020. Now, with difficulties securing bailout funding and a second lockdown ushering in winter, things are getting worse, says National Geographic.

[Opportunity and risk in the nature-based bioeconomy](#)

Talking to SciDev.Net, Chatham House's Patrick Schröder warns green isn't always sustainable in this opinion article, as the Global Bioeconomy Summit kicks off.

People

[Future Leader Fellowships: Success Stories in Business - Meet Rachel](#)

In this Innovate UK blog, Aja Marriott, Funding Officer for the Future Leaders Fellowships talks to a successfully awarded business-based fellow, Rachel Carey, Chief Scientist at Zinc, who leads on research and innovation activities with mission-driven, science-rich start-ups.

[Valerie Curtis obituary](#)

The Guardian covers the life of Professor Valerie Curtis a behavioural scientist devoted to championing hygiene and sanitation.

Opportunities

[RSB's Science at Home](#)

Join us for the RSB's first ever virtual science festival! We're launching our first ever online science festival, to bring a range of videos, activities, games and more straight to your computer screen to entertain and engage you and your family. We'll be promoting highlights of the festival during the weekend of 21st - 22nd November 2020, but content will be available indefinitely afterwards for you to enjoy and share.

[Early Career Life Scientists' Symposium](#)

Teams of early-career researchers can apply to organise a one-day symposium on a scientific theme and format of their choice. The Physiological Society, the Biochemical Society and the British Pharmacological Society will together contribute £3000 funding for an in-person, hybrid or entirely virtual event.

Closes: 20 November 2020

['Science and The Arts' and 'Geography' Section Recorders](#)

Since the foundation of the British Science Festival, the Scientific Sections, comprised of science professionals, have played a key role in developing the programme of events and organising talks, demonstrations, and other activities. The British Science Association (BSA) are currently looking for new 'Science and The Arts' and 'Geography' Section Recorders.

Closes: 23 November 2020

BioArtAttack 2020

Get creative and submit an entry for our BioArtAttack 2020 competition! Your entry could be a drawing, collage or even a sculpture, taking inspiration from the smallest or the largest parts of the living world. Submit a photograph of your BioArtAttack online and visit [our website](#) for further information.

Closes: 30 November 2020

Understanding researcher views on the UK's national assessment programme, REF2021

UKRI has commissioned RAND Europe to conduct a real-time evaluation of REF 2021 on behalf of the four UK funding bodies. The study aims to assess attitudes, perspectives and behaviours towards the REF 2021 across the sector, and explore how REF policies and changes are embedded in the way submissions are prepared and delivered. As part of this study, RAND Europe is conducting a survey of research staff across UK higher education institutions.

Closes: 30 November 2020

Royal Society pairing scheme

Each year 30 research scientists are paired with UK parliamentarians and civil servants. They gain an insight into each other's work as well as a better understanding of how their research findings can help inform policy making. Through the scheme scientists will make lasting relationships with parliamentarians and civil servants as well as colleagues working across a wide range of scientific disciplines.

Closes: 1 December 2020

RSB School Biology Teacher of the Year Award

Do you know an amazing biology teacher? Students, parents and carers can now [suggest a teacher](#) who they think is outstanding for the Royal Society of Biology's School Biology Teacher of the Year Award. Visit the Society's [website](#) for further information.

Closes: 29 January 2021

Emerging Topics in Life Sciences

Emerging Topics in Life Sciences is planning a special themed issue exploring emerging technologies, approaches and products in the life sciences industry space, and we would be delighted if you would consider contributing. The journal is published by Portland Press on behalf of the Biochemical Society and the Royal Society of Biology, with all profits returned in service of the community. Open Access publication is available but is not required, with open access articles deposited to PubMed Central. All submissions will be independently peer reviewed.

If you are interested, you can choose to submit either a short, 3000-word mini-review of the latest findings, challenges and future implications, or a 1000-word opinion-based perspective piece. Our aim with the issue is not to provide an in-depth review of everything currently ongoing in industry, but to inform our academic audience of some of the most recent developments and encourage them to explore. Ideally, we are looking for submissions in early 2021, however we are able to be flexible and work with you if this is something you are interested in. Contact editorial@portlandpress.com (FAO Emma Pettengale) to discuss further details.

Consultations

Draft Strategy for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Research 2022-2027

The Scottish government funds a multi-million-pound portfolio of research on the environment, natural resources and agriculture. This consultation allows you to give your views on the priorities for future research, and to ensure that the strategy is setting the right direction and approach for the future research portfolio.

Closes: 14 December 2020

Total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS)

In 2019 the government consulted on restricting advertising of HFSS for TV and online. It asked for views on whether to extend current advertising restrictions on broadcast TV and online media, including consulting on watershed restrictions. This new consultation goes further and looks at how a total HFSS advertising restriction could be implemented online.

Closes: 22 December 2020

[Reducing ammonia emissions from urea fertilisers](#)

As ammonia emissions are predominantly from agriculture (87%) and around 8% are from the use of solid urea fertilisers, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs seeks your views on three policy options that give us the greatest ammonia emission reductions from regulating the use or sale of solid urea fertilisers.

Closes: 26 January 2021

[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

[Policy Lates: Climate crisis - biosciences for a state of emergency](#)

23 November 2020

18:30 – 20:30 GMT

In the build-up to COP26, this Policy Lates event will explore the role for biosciences in reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and planning for a projected minimum rise in global temperature of 2°C, from several perspectives.

[Quick Start Guide to Connecting with Industry](#)

25 November 2020

15:00 – 16:00 GMT

This lively and informative one hour interactive webinar from the Society of Experimental Biology will consider different ways in which researchers can work with industry including collaboration, joint funding, consultancy, startup and a career in business.

[Sanger Seminar Series](#)

The Wellcome Sanger Institute is pleased to launch a series of virtual seminars, showcasing the diversity of genomic research at the Institute aimed at tackling some of the biggest challenges in human health and disease. The virtual seminar series will take place monthly and is freely available and open to all who wish to attend.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all in person RSB events due to take place in 2020 have been cancelled, postponed or moved to an online format. Updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). Postponed events will hopefully run in late 2021. We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

And finally...

[We knew platypuses were incredible. Now we know they glow, too](#)

The fur of the platypus glows under a blacklight—a finding that raises questions about its role in these strange mammals, reports National Geographic.

Royal Society of Biology

Science Policy Team
1 Naoroji Street
London
WC1X 0GB
policy@rsb.org.uk

Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Royal Society of Biology.

[Click here to unsubscribe from this publication](#)

Or, manage your subscription to this and to other RSB publications by signing in (or register for free if you don't have an account) to [mySociety](#) and selecting 'My Subscriptions' under 'Me and the RSB', then scroll through the options and select 'Science Policy Newsletter'.

© Royal Society of Biology 2020. Registered Charity Number: 277981
1 Naoroji Street, London, WC1X 0GB