

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

15 October 2021

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

Royal Society of Biology news

[Outstanding apprentices recognised by RSB's Apprentice of the Year Awards](#)

Four apprentices have been recognised as outstanding in their fields as part of the RSB's Apprentice of the Year award.

Health and biomedicine

[Laser study to understand virus spread](#)

UK Research and Innovation has announced a new study will reveal how viruses hitch-hike on airborne droplets using a powerful laser trapping technique.

[First new treatment for sickle cell in 20 years](#)

The first new sickle-cell treatment in 20 years will help keep thousands of people out of hospital over the next three years, reports BBC News.

[Opinion: Neuroscientists make strides towards deciphering the human brain](#)

According to this Nature Editorial, early findings from the BRAIN Initiative are exciting, but researchers still have a way to go in their quest to understand the entire human brain.

Food and drink

[UK public now eating significantly less meat](#)

A study has shown that daily meat consumption in the UK has fallen by 17% in the last decade, reports BBC News.

Agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries

[Opinion: Cefas and industry science collaborations: scallop stock assessment](#)

Andy Lawler, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) scientist, who specialises in commercial shellfish, has written a short blog focussing on Cefas' fisheries science work in partnership with the fishing industry.

Environment and ecology

[Analysis warns global biodiversity is below 'safe limit' ahead of COP 15](#)

Ahead of the 2021 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15), the Natural History Museum has launched the Biodiversity Trends Explorer, an online tool that will allow everyone, from members of the public to policymakers, to see how the biodiversity of different regions has changed over time.

[A boost for bees as Defra works with beekeepers to implement the Healthy Bees Plan 2030](#)

A Government press release describing how enhancing biosecurity, skills and science is central to delivering the aims of the Healthy Bees Plan 2030.

[Number of butterflies in the UK at a record low, survey finds](#)

Experts say the results of the Butterfly Conservation's latest survey signal that nature is 'in crisis', reports the Guardian.

Water and air

[New regional champions to help improve air quality across UK](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Met Office have appointed four regional champions to support the work of the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) Clean Air Programme.

Climate and energy

[Historical climate emissions reveal responsibility of big polluting nations](#)

Six of the top ten, including China and Russia, are yet to show ambition on emissions cuts before Cop26, reports the Guardian.

[Plans unveiled to decarbonise UK power system by 2035](#)

A Government press release describing how the plans will focus on building a secure, home-grown energy sector that reduces reliance on fossil fuels and exposure to volatile global wholesale energy prices.

Animal research

[Mesmerised brown crabs 'attracted to' undersea cables](#)

The Guardian covers how research in Scotland shows animals freeze near the electromagnetic field with implications for metabolism and migration.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Bio-researchers of the future get £22.5 million boost](#)

According to UK Research and Innovation, the next generation of researchers in bioscience have received a £22.5 million investment from the UK Government.

[Research areas that win science prizes 'see 40 per cent growth'](#)

A study suggests that extra 'star' scientists flock to prize-winning topics five to ten years after the award, writes Times Higher education.

[Opinion: Grants aren't the only way to support research](#)

Writing for Wonkhe, Becky Ioppolo, Affiliated Researcher, University of Cambridge, and Steven Wooding, Senior Policy Analyst, University of Cambridge, say winning a grant is a triumph for any research team, but we shouldn't lose sight of the importance of QR funding.

Schools education policy

[Lower exam grades possible for 2022 Welsh students](#)

Pupils could face lower grades in 2022 as Qualifications Wales aligns its approach with England, reports BBC News.

Open access and publication policy

[Climate change: Voices from global south muted by climate science](#)

BBC News covers how climate change academics from some of the regions worst hit by warming are struggling to be published, according to a new analysis.

[Opinion: Libraries and publishers must make e-books accessible for all](#)

Writing for Wonkhe, Libby Homer, Director of Student and Library Services, Anglia Ruskin University, asks why so many students still struggle to access e-books?

Business and industry

[How businesses can connect with the brightest minds in Europe](#)

UK Research and Innovation covers how the European Research Council provides low-risk opportunities for the UK industry to connect with world-leading researchers and get funding of up to €2.5 million for innovation.

Diversity and inclusion

[A new UK-wide measure of socioeconomic disadvantage](#)

The Higher Education Policy Institute describes a new report published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency detailing a new area-level measure of socioeconomic disadvantage developed using educational qualifications and occupation data contained within Census 2011.

[UKRI publishes updated detailed ethnicity data](#)

UK Research and Innovation has published updated detailed ethnicity data, including results from the 2019-20 financial year.

[Researchers voice dismay at all-male science Nobels](#)

All seven winners of this year's science prizes were men. Some say this shows a disappointing lack of progress towards diversifying the awards, reports Nature News.

Outreach and engagement

[Global citizens' assembly to be chosen for UN climate talks](#)

The Guardian covers how one hundred people from around the world are to take part in a citizens' assembly to discuss the climate crisis over the next month, before presenting their findings at the UN Cop26 climate summit.

[Nottinghamshire girl, 6, wins PM award for climate change campaign](#)

A six-year-old girl has received an award from the prime minister for her work in raising awareness of climate change, reports BBC News.

International news

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

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

[First drug for dengue, an excruciating disease, may be on the horizon](#)

The American Association for the Advancement of Science describes a new study that has identified a compound that blocks dengue virus replication in test tube experiments and in mice, and it might one day be available as an easy-to-take pill.

[Opinion: Deploy heat officers, policies and metrics](#)

Cities need heat governance to plan for extreme temperatures and protect those most at risk, says Nature Comment.

[‘Green infrastructure’ shift for sustainable cities](#)

UrbanShift, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), will support 23 cities to develop a range of strategies, such as green infrastructure, low-carbon transport systems and schemes to reduce or recycle waste, reports SciDev.Net.

People

[NERC awards prestigious fellowships to outstanding UK scientists](#)

Talented scientists from across the UK have been awarded fellowships by NERC to deliver and communicate innovative research, reports UK Research and Innovation.

Opportunities

Get involved in developing expert events:

We are seeking two RSB members to volunteer their expertise and represent us (one each) on the [JPAG](#) meeting committees developing seminars for 2022. The meetings to be developed by the group will cover the topics:

- Antibody-drug conjugates to be run in May 2022
- Orthogonality of methods for biological analysis to be held later in 2022

If you have expertise and interest in these areas and would like to get involved in the current development of these meeting programmes please:

1. Apply via mySociety <https://my.rsb.org.uk/services.php?section=jobs&jobid=69>
2. Complete the expertise and interest section of mySociety (in the Your Profile section)

This opportunity is for MRSB and FRSB. The RSB is committed to ensuring equal opportunities in the life sciences, and supports diversity throughout learning and in careers. Applications as soon as possible please.

Closes: 22 October 2021

[Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award](#)

Now open for nominations, the award aims to identify the UK's leading bioscience higher education (HE) teachers, recognising the invaluable role they play in educating and inspiring the next generation of biologists. If you know a bioscience lecturer who deserves recognition for their passion and ideas, encourage them to submit an application this year.

Closes: 30 November 2021

BioArtAttack 2021

Get creative and submit an entry for our [BioArtAttack 2021](#) 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 2021

[STEM for BRITAIN 2022](#)

STEM for BRITAIN is a poster competition for early-stage researchers which is held in the Houses of Parliament. Applications are invited in five subject categories: Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Physics, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Chemistry. Finalists will be invited to an event in the Houses of Parliament where they will present their poster to Parliamentarians and the subject judges.

Closes: 6 December 2021

Consultations

[Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include](#)

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) wants to know what you think about preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategies and what to include. The strategies are a new system of maps and proposed actions for nature's recovery. The Environment Bill will create a legal requirement for these to be created across England.

Closes: 2 November 2021

[Beaver reintroduction and management in England](#)

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) wants to know what you think about their proposed approach to beaver reintroduction and management in England.

Closes: 17 November 2021

[The future regulation of medical devices in the United Kingdom](#)

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is inviting members of the public to provide their views on possible changes to the regulatory framework for medical devices in the United Kingdom.

Closes: 25 November 2021

[Plant biosecurity strategy for Great Britain](#)

Defra wants to know your views on how the Government, the plant industry, and the public can help improve plant biosecurity in Great Britain.

Closes: 30 November 2021

[Labelling for animal welfare](#)

Defra wants to know what you think about possible reforms to food labelling for animal welfare. The aim is to give Defra an understanding of how this might impact business, farmers, and consumers.

Closes: 6 December 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

[Postgraduate Study in Plant Health in the UK](#)

17 November 2021

14:00 – 16:30

Are you interested in tackling challenges in sustainable agriculture, forestry and horticulture and in researching or developing a career in plant health? The British Society for Plant Pathology, Royal Society of Biology and the Association of Applied Biologists invites prospective masters, PGCert, PGDip or PhD students to join us for a virtual event that will introduce opportunities for postgraduate study in plant health in the UK.

[RSB Connect 2021: bringing outreach and engagement into the future](#)

23 – 25 November 2021

RSB Connect 2021 is a three-day online bioscience outreach and engagement symposium. The event will include talks, presentations, Q&A sessions and networking opportunities to provide training, information and discussion of contemporary issues relating to outreach and engagement. This event is for any academics, early career researchers, bioscientists, outreach and engagement professionals and anyone doing any kind of outreach and engagement within or alongside their work or studies. RSB and event partner Member Organisation's members receive a discounted rate on tickets, please see [more details and apply online](#).

[The 19th World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology](#)

The 19th World Congress of Basic & Clinical Pharmacology will be taking place in Glasgow, Scotland in July 2023. The programme for the congress is now available and includes cutting-edge science from 484 speakers and chairs from 36 countries. View the programme now: <https://wcp2023.org/programme/>

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all RSB events will continue to take place online and updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

And finally...

[New species is oldest meat-eating dinosaur found in UK](#)

The oldest-known meat-eating dinosaur discovered in the UK has been named in honour of trailblazing Natural History Museum scientist Angela Milner, who passed away in August 2021.

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