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News

RSB news

[Royal Society of Biology member wins gold at STEM for BRITAIN 2025](#)

Four bioscience winners were selected from 30 finalists at the annual STEM for BRITAIN competition for early career researchers, with a member of the RSB claiming the Gold Award.

Plant health and biosecurity

[Hidden allies: Trees and fungi](#)

This Science Daily article highlights research showing that an endophytic fungus of the genus *Cladosporium* can increase the defensive capabilities of black poplar trees against herbivorous insects.

[Hutton researchers identify key component in a spray to combat cereal disease in an environmentally friendly way](#)

The James Hutton Institute reports that its scientists are one step closer to identifying a spray that can ‘silence’ genes on a type of blight that impacts many cereal crops and whose frequency and severity has been increasing in recent years.

Plant breeding

[More than 100,000 African seeds put in Svalbard vault for safekeeping](#)

The Guardian reports that more than 100,000 seeds from across Africa have been deposited in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, the world’s repository for specimens intended to preserve crop diversity in the event of disaster.

[Scientists discover genes to grow bigger tomatoes and eggplants](#)

This Science Daily article highlights research by scientists at the John Hopkins Institute, who have discovered genes that control how large the fruits of tomatoes and eggplants will grow.

[Gene-edited non-browning banana could cut food waste, scientists say](#)

The Guardian reports on the launch of a genetically engineered non-browning banana, which could help reduce food waste.

Agriculture

Record farmers in SFI schemes as government successfully allocates sustainable farming budget

The Government has stopped accepting new applications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), with the scheme now having more than 37,000 multi-year live agreements.

Green scheme closure a 'shattering blow' to farms, says union

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) has warned that farmers may turn their backs on environmental work for more intensive food production after the sudden closure of the SFI scheme, reports BBC News.

Controlled-release fertilizers can spread microplastics on US cropland – study

The Guardian highlights research showing that fertilizers that shed microplastics are increasingly spreading on America's cropland.

Futuristic fields, how robotics and automation are slowly revolutionising agriculture

This Euractiv article discusses the potential of robotics in improving agricultural efficiency, and the complexities around this.

Food security

Microplastics hinder plant photosynthesis, study finds, threatening millions with starvation

Research has shown that pollution of the planet by microplastics is significantly cutting food supplies by damaging the ability of plants to photosynthesise, reports the Guardian.

African grasslands need to become more climate-change resilient

Rothamsted Research highlights a commentary piece saying that Africa's grasslands face increasing challenges from climate change, threatening the livelihoods of millions across the continent.

Noticing the Treasure – The Orphan Crops with Pocket-Sized Machines

This article from the Global Plant Council discusses the potential of several underutilised orphan crop species in improving global security.

Climate change threatens future of banana industry

Rothamsted Research highlights a study showing that climate change will drastically affect the banana production sector, with socioeconomic factors, such as labour availability and infrastructure, significantly constraining climate change adaptation.

Biodiversity and conservation

UK sets out biodiversity commitments to protect nature

The UK has outlined its commitment to the implementation of UN COP15 biodiversity framework by publishing its National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP), reports this Government press release.

Forestry

[Increase of domestic timber to boost UK economy and housebuilding](#)

This Government press release reports that new, ambitious plans to increase the use of timber in construction to boost the domestic timber industry, economic growth, rural jobs and housebuilding targets, have been announced by Environment Minister Mary Creagh.

[Plant diverse tree species to spread risk in climate crisis, study says](#)

The Guardian highlights a study which says that an 'investment portfolio approach' needs to be applied to large-scale tree planting across the world to reduce the risks of the wrong species being planted in the wrong place.

[Early detection of deadly emerald ash borer needed to protect UK trees](#)

Rothamsted Research highlights a study outlining how improved surveillance strategies could work in the UK to protect native ash trees from a voracious new killer: the emerald ash borer.

Other news

[Diverse minds for a diverse world: the case for Neurodiversity in science](#)

This article by the John Innes Centre discusses the importance of supporting Neurodiversity in the science sector.

[RHS asks public to help map UK's daffodils and find rare pink, white and 'bonfire' yellow varieties](#)

The RHS is asking industry and gardeners to help it map the UK's daffodils and locate three rare or historically significant varieties as it celebrates the country's most ubiquitous plant this spring.

Opportunities

[Plant Health Professional Register](#)

Those working in plant health are encouraged to apply for the RSB's [Plant Health Professionals Register](#), which was created in partnership with Defra to recognise individuals with skills and experience that align with the current [Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain](#). You are also invited to join our [Plant Health Professionals LinkedIn network](#) where you can explore and share job opportunities, events and more.

[Signs of Spring Survey returns for spring 2025](#)

The Royal Society of Biology is working in partnership with the Field Studies Council to invite everyone to look out for ten [Signs of Spring](#) across the UK - bluebells, bumblebees, butterflies, daffodils, damselflies and dragonflies, frog spawn, hazel catkins, ladybirds, snowdrops and the first cut of the lawn and [to add your sightings to our survey](#). Please take part to record when you first notice these signs of spring near you as the year progresses. We are asking what you saw, when, where and what the weather conditions were when you saw this sign of spring. The survey will remain open until **18th June**.

RSB Regional Events Grants

The RSB is offering members grants of up to £1,000 to help create inspiring events or activities that celebrate the biosciences and engage diverse audiences. Whether you are planning a biology workshop, talk series, or community project, these grants can help bring your vision to life. [Apply for a grant via mySociety](#) by **Sunday 30 March**.

RSB Technical Skills Courses 2025

Learn new practical skills and elevate your techniques with the Royal Society of Biology's laboratory-based courses! These include our courses in Microscopy & Microbiology on **22 May** and ELISA on **23 May** at Brunel University, and Aseptic Techniques, and Cell Culture: The Basics at the University of York on **3 and 10 June**. Visit our [training events webpage](#) for full details and to book your place on these courses.

Royal Society of Biology Photography Competition 2025

'Restoring Biodiversity and Habitat' is the theme of this year's Royal Society of Biology [Photography Competition](#) which is open to amateur photographers in two age categories; 18 year olds and over, and under 18s . Visit [our website](#) for more information. Submit up to three images through the competition's webpage by **19 June**.

Call for nominations for experts and fellows for the upcoming IPBES 2nd Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Applications are now open for experts and fellows to participate within IPBES as part of the 2nd Global Assessment, which will be a landmark international report. Further details on each of these positions, including the types of expertise required and the length of commitment, can be found in the relevant notification (for [experts](#), and for [fellows](#)). If you are interested in one of these positions, please apply by following the instructions found in the relevant notification. Please note the deadline for applications is **28th March 2025**. Any further questions, please contact rebecca.lowe@defra.gov.uk.

Consultations

Under the microscope

The Science, Innovation and Technology Committee – a cross-party group of MPs – wants to hear your ideas for topics it should put 'under the microscope'. The committee's role is to look at Government policies on science, technology and innovation, and make recommendations for how these could be improved.

Closes: 24 March 2025

The Science Teaching Survey 2025

The Science Teaching Survey is the largest science education survey in the UK and Ireland. In this year's survey, we're asking what you need: the missing tools, resources and approaches that could make a real difference.

Closes: 6 April 2025

Plant Varieties and Seeds Framework for Precision Bred Plant Varieties

This consultation seeks feedback on the proposed Plant Varieties and Seeds framework for precision bred plant varieties in England, including the proposed Precision Bred Plant Variety List for England, and the provision of information on precision bred seed and other plant reproductive material.

Closes: 14 April 2025

Mission Government inquiry

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) is welcoming written submissions as part of its inquiry looking at the delivery and impact of a mission-led Government.

Closes: 14 April 2025

Land use in England

The Government is seeking views on vision for land use in England and how to deliver it. This consultation will inform the development of a Land Use Framework. The RSB is currently considering a response to this inquiry. Please contact consultation@rsb.org.uk for more information and if you would like to contribute.

Closes: 25 April 2025

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

Royal Society of Biology Bioscience Careers Day (BCD)

25 March 2025 - 27 March 2025

12:30 – 14:30

Online (Zoom)

The theme for this year's BCD is bioscience careers in the modern day and a [draft programme](#) is available to view. BCD is aimed at undergraduate and master's students. Recent bioscience graduates, PhD students, postdocs, careers advisors and school/college students considering a bioscience degree are also very welcome.

Embedding natural capital in the built environment

8 April 2025

12:30 - 14:00

Online (Zoom)

This webinar will include discussions on how we can protect and improve natural capital and the benefits it provides in our towns and cities, in the wider context of planning and infrastructure development. This will involve talks from experts working in this space, followed by a Q&A session. This event is open to all and is relevant to those working in policy, academia, private business, and wider civil society. This webinar is the first in a new series from the Natural Capital Initiative (NCI), a partnership between three leading scientific organisations in the UK: the [Royal Society of Biology](#), the [UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology](#) and the [James Hutton Institute](#).

Minoritised Life Scientists Future Forum

31 March 2025 - 2 April 2025

ICC Birmingham, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA

The Minoritised Life Scientists Future Forum is a ground-breaking event taking place in Birmingham from 31 March to 2 April 2025, dedicated to amplifying underrepresented voices in the life sciences. This unique forum will offer over 200 hours of talks, workshops, mentoring, and professional development opportunities, all aimed at building a more inclusive future for STEM.

Confident Scientific Presentations

6 May 2025 - 8 May 2025

Online (Zoom)

In this practical, interactive presentation skills training, participants will learn the foundations of how to plan, design and deliver a clear scientific presentation - with confidence.

Modelling Plant Stem Cells: Evolution, Development and Regeneration

18 May 2025 - 21 May 2025

Fanhams Hall, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 7PZ

This four-day workshop, organised by the Company of Biologists and led by experts in plant biology from Utrecht University and the Sainsbury Laboratory, offers an in-depth exploration of the evolutionary and developmental mechanisms driving plant stem cell plasticity. Through a combination of theoretical and practical sessions, the workshop will focus on experimental and computational modelling approaches to understanding plant stemness.

And finally...

International Women's Day 2025: our favourite Kew stories

This Kew Science article highlights stories from the women of Kew and the projects they have been undertaking over the past year.



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