

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

14 March 2019

News

Top stories

On 13 March 2019 the Chancellor Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP presented his [Spring Statement](#) to Parliament. Here's our summary of what the Chancellor announced Government will do, of relevance for the bioscience community:

Research funding and higher education policy

There will be exemptions for PhD-level occupations from the cap on high-skilled visas from this autumn, overseas research activity will also count as residence in the UK for the purpose of applying for settlement; £45 million for Bioinformatics research in Cambridge; £79 million for a new supercomputer in Edinburgh, the processing power of which will contribute to building on breakthroughs and making discoveries in medicine and climate science; a cut from 10% to 5% of the co-investment rate employers pay towards apprenticeship training from April 1st, while levy-paying employers may share more levy funds across their supply chains.

Climate and energy

Government will mandate net gains for biodiversity on new infrastructure and housing developments in England; introduce a Future Homes Standard by 2025 to improve energy efficiency and low carbon heating; increase the proportion of green gas in the grid, with the aim to reduce dependence on fossil fuels; and release a call for evidence on a Business energy efficiency scheme.

Environment and ecology

Government will launch a global review into the Economics of Biodiversity; support 443,000 square kilometres of Ascension Island waters to be designated as a Marine Protected Area; and launch a call for evidence on Offsetting Transport Emissions to explore consumer understanding of the emissions from their journeys, and options to offset them.

Scroll down for more..

Royal Society of Biology news

[STEM researchers grill MPs on post-Brexit science at RSB's Voice of the Future](#)

Young and early career scientists were today given the chance to voice their questions about the future of science to MPs and ministers during a dramatic day for UK politics.

Health and biomedicine

[British Science Week: To fight drug-resistant infections we need more data](#)

[New genetic data on 50,000 UK Biobank participants made available to the global health research community](#)

A vast tranche of new UK Biobank genetic data becomes available to health researchers today, offering an unprecedented resource to enhance understanding of human biology and aid in therapeutic discovery.

[High blood pressure, diabetes and obesity each linked to unhealthy brains](#)

[MRC-funded study suggests deep brain stimulation could help OCD symptoms](#)

The debilitating behaviours and all-consuming thoughts which affect people with severe obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) could be significantly improved with targeted deep brain stimulation, according to the findings of an MRC-funded study ran by University College London (UCL).

[Are viruses the best weapon for fighting superbugs?](#)

[New genetic data offers unprecedented resource for health research](#)

Environment and ecology

[Government to mandate 'biodiversity net gain'](#)

[UK takes step forward in global marine protection](#)

UK Government backs plans by Ascension Island to designate over 150,000 square miles of its waters as a fully protected no-take Marine Protected Area.

[Ascension – reserve gives lasting protection to marine wilderness](#)

Water and air

[Air pollution deaths are double previous estimates, finds research](#)

Researchers say dirty air is killing 800,000 people a year in Europe, and urge the phasing out of fossil fuel burning

Climate and energy

[Gas heating in new homes to be banned from 2025](#)

[Offshore wind energy revolution to provide a third of all UK electricity by 2030](#)

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry announced today the launch of the new joint government-industry Offshore Wind Sector Deal.

Waste

[Space tech could have the answer to reducing food waste](#)

Government and Parliament

[Looking ahead to the Spring Statement 2019](#)

[Spring Statement must renew commitment to blue skies research](#)

Ministers love talking about grand government-directed projects, but Philip Hammond must reaffirm tomorrow the UK's support for open-ended research using quality-related funding, says Stephanie Smith

[Chancellor pledges £200m for research into medical lasers and gene technology](#)

Philip Hammond will use spring statement to support hi-tech industry in Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxfordshire

[Science Minister speaks of the potential young people have in addressing the opportunities of the future](#)

Chris Skidmore speaks at the Industrial Strategy Science Fair, part of British Science Week 2019.

Exiting the EU

[UK considers post-Brexit research fund open to world](#)

The government will assess whether a UK granting scheme could help make up for lost EU research funding.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Spring Statement: PhD-level jobs removed from UK visa cap](#)

Philip Hammond also says panel report for post-18 review will be 'published shortly'

[Budget: Employer apprenticeship contributions cut](#)

Chancellor Philip Hammond announces move to reduce cost of apprenticeship training for small businesses

[New investment in European Bioinformatics Institute to tackle life threatening diseases](#)

European Bioinformatics Institute in Cambridge receives £45 million government investment to increase centre's computing, storage and building capacity.

[Edinburgh to be home to new national 'supercomputer'](#)

[Novel findings rare from international collaborations](#)

Global teams shy away from risky research.

[Third wave of the UK's science and innovation audits published](#)

The latest wave of science and innovation audits have been published today, highlighting the UK's scientific and research strengths across the country.

[Make degree apprenticeships a force for social mobility, says the Office for Students](#)

Degree apprenticeships are growing significantly and offer a route to increased social mobility, but more work is needed to realise their potential

Open access and publication policy

[A report about Plan S's potential effects on journals marks a busy week for the open-access movement](#)

Business and industry

[Fiddling the margins or a powerful signal? The green economy reacts to the Spring Statement](#)

Chancellor Philip Hammond has today (13 March) unveiled new measures to champion biodiversity and drive resilience in the UK's housing stock as part of his Spring Statement, but reactions suggest the Government is still moving too slowly.

[Spring Statement: Chancellor unveils policies to 'build sustainability into the heart' of UK economy](#)

[9 women innovators get government backing for inventions with global potential](#)

Pioneering female inventors have been awarded funding and business support to develop and grow their business

[Intellectual Property Minister speaks of the importance of ensuring UK IP remains some of the best in the world](#)

Chris Skidmore has spoken at the Managing IP Forum where he has spoken of his commitment to protect and strengthen the UK IP system.

Diversity and inclusion

[Why we're creating Wikipedia profiles for BAME scientists](#)

How an 'editathon' can help black, Asian and minority ethnic scientists — and science as a whole, explains Nicola O'Reilly.

[BBSRC leader celebrates balance on International Women's Day](#)

On International Women's Day, Professor Melanie Welham, Executive Chair for the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), part of UK Research and Innovation shares her passion for family, bioscience and a balanced life.

[Purple plaques celebrate female innovators](#)

Outreach and engagement

[She Invented a Board Game With Scientific Integrity. It's Taking Off.](#)

How Elizabeth Hargrave turned a passion for ornithology and spreadsheets into a popular game about birds.

Measuring impact

[UK Science and Innovation Network impact stories](#)

UK Science and Innovation Network (SIN) impact stories highlight the impact of the work SIN is doing around the globe.

International news

[How Africa can quell the next disease outbreaks](#)

As mobility increases, so must investments in national public-health institutions and local leadership, says John N. Nkengasong.

[Trump seeks big cuts to science funding — again](#)

The US president wants to cut spending at the National Institutes of Health and Environmental Protection Agency, but it's not clear whether Congress will go along.

[Cuba acknowledges climate change threats in its constitution](#)

Move is the latest in a series that the country has made aimed at dealing with stronger hurricanes, more intense droughts and rising sea levels.

Opinion

[Opinion: Why science needs philosophy](#)

People

[Working life: stem cell scientist Professor Fiona Watt](#)

Professor Fiona Watt is Director of the Centre for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine at King's College London and last year became Executive Chair of the MRC. Here she explains the excitement of studying stem cells, her vision for a healthier nation and why there's no shame in failing.

[Tony Juniper CBE appointed as Natural England chair](#)

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has today confirmed Tony Juniper CBE as the new Chair of Natural England.

Opportunities

[Research to improve diversity in our science engagement programmes:](#)

[Request for proposals](#)

The British Science Association are looking for proposals from organisations that are interested in working with us [BSA] to conduct research into our programmes and participants, which will transform our organisation and ultimately enable us to improve the inclusivity of our programmes and the diversity of our audiences.

Closes: 14 March 2019

[The BBSRC Impact Writing Competition 2019](#)

Are you aware of inspiring research, supported by BBSRC, making a real, tangible difference to people's lives?

Closes: 18 March 2019

[Future of the blue planet: Parliament conference on oceans](#)

Worried about what is happening to our oceans? Take part in the Parliament's conference on their future taking place on 19 March.

[Become an Ask for Evidence ambassador](#)

Sense about Science is recruiting 20 new volunteer ambassadors around the UK to lead the Ask for Evidence campaign.

Closes: 22 March 2019

[UKRI seeks nominations for Research Organisation Consultation Group](#)

Closes: 21 March 2019

[Plant Health Undergraduate Summer Studentships 2019](#)

The UK Plant Sciences Federation (UKPSF) invites plant health researchers to submit proposals for one of nine available funded studentships for undergraduates to run over the summer of 2019. Funding for the scheme is provided by Defra, BSPP, N8 AgriFood and the David Colegrave Foundation. Proposed research projects must address at least one of the following themes:

Detection or control | Data & modelling | Trade | Host plants / Earth observations | High-risk pests or pathogens | Knowledge exchange | Oak health

More details and eligibility requirements are available here:

<https://www.rsb.org.uk/plant-studentships>

Closes: 26 March 2019

[Microbiology Society call for evidence](#)

The Microbiology Society have launched a call for evidence to inform their "[A Sustainable Future](#)" [policy project](#) on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are seeking views and evidence on challenges to achieving the SDGs, and the ways that microbiology can and does contribute to achieving the SDGs, including knowledge, skills, research, innovation and technology. If you are an individual or organisation with expertise in this area, please complete their [short questionnaire](#).

Closes: 31 March 2019

[Innovate UK Smart funding launches with £20 million grant competition](#)

Closes: 24 April 2019

[New cut-off for highlight topic ideas](#)

NERC invites the environmental science community to submit new ideas for highlight topics.

Closes: 15 May 2019

[RSB Outreach and Engagement Award 2019](#)

Are you a bioscience researcher involved in science communication? If you work in any sector of UK biosciences, apply for the Royal Society of Biology Outreach and Engagement Award 2019 and win up to £1500.

Closes: 28th June 2019

[Next Generation Networks for Neuroscience \(NeuroNex\)](#)

The MRC in collaboration with the National Science Foundation of the United States, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) of Canada, Fonds de Recherche du Quebec (FRQ) of Quebec, and Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) of Germany are pleased to invite proposals for the NeuroNex Phase 2 call 2019. This initiative will provide funding for high-quality UK-based research projects focused on addressing grand challenges in neuroscience as part of larger networks with international groups.

Closes: 14 June 2019

[The Nancy Rothwell Award 2019](#)

The Nancy Rothwell Award 2019 specimen drawing competition for 7 – 18 year olds is now open for submissions. Prizes include an experience day at the [Royal Veterinary College](#) for students, and their school can also win £100. Visit the Royal Society of Biology [website](#) for more information.

Closes: 30 July 2019

[STEM Bursary applications open](#)

Career changers can now apply for a £20,000 bursary to support them while training to fill high-demand teaching roles in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.

[Countryside Stewardship opens for applications in 2019](#)

Farmers, foresters and land managers can now apply for a range of schemes that pay for environmental benefits

Consultations

[EU implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the area of access to justice in environmental matters](#)

The EU and its Member States are parties to the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee found that the EU does not comply with the Convention because of insufficient administrative or judicial redress at EU level. This initiative will evaluate the current situation and assess options to address compliance, to underpin possible decision-making.

Closes: 14 March 2019

[Knowledge Exchange Framework Consultation 2019](#)

Research England invites responses to its proposals for the first iteration of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), which aims to evaluate and benchmark the contribution that higher education institutions make to the exploitation of the knowledge they generate.

Closes: 14 March 2019

[Conservation covenants](#)

Defra is seeking views on plans to introduce legislation for conservation covenants in England, allowing landowners to secure lasting conservation benefits.

Closes: 22 March 2019

[Evaluation of the Feed Additives Regulation](#)

Closes: 3 April 2019

[Evaluation of the European Fishery Statistics](#)

Closes: 12 April 2019

[The Scottish Government has opened a consultation introducing amendments to the Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#)

Closes: 26 April 2019

[Consultation on Environmental Principles and Governance in Scotland](#)

Closes: 11 May 2019

Events

[Research Review Launch and 2018 3Rs Prize Presentation](#)

18 March 2019

Central London

We [NC3Rs] will be launching the latest review of [their] [3Rs](#) research portfolio at this event, which will include presentations from NC3Rs-funded scientists featured in the review. The event presents an opportunity for attendees to hear about some of the research NC3Rs have funded. The winner of the 2018 3Rs Prize will also be announced at the event. The 3Rs Prize is sponsored by GSK and awarded annually for an outstanding primary research paper reporting a significant impact on the 3Rs.

[Neurodiversity and Productivity](#)

20 March 2019

Wellcome Collection, London

Cognitive scientist Anna Remington researches into the positives of autism and neurodiversity. She is currently investigating the skills and abilities that autistic people have and how our concept of productivity relates to neurodiversity and disability. Come and hear more about her current [Heart n Soul](#) project and ask your questions.

[Open invitation to the April Advisory Committee on Social Science meeting](#)

2 April 2019

London

The Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) of the Food Standards Agency is holding its third meeting in London on Tuesday 2 April 2019.

[Heads of University BioSciences \(HUBS\) Annual Meeting 2019](#)

30 April - 1 May 2019

Cambridge

We are delighted to invite all members to attend the inaugural HUBS Annual Meeting. Early-bird registration is now open for this two-day conference, which will feature sessions on research, higher education policy, and teaching and learning in the biosciences.

[Valuing our Life Support Systems 2019 – Book your place now!](#)

21-22 May 2019

The Crystal, London

[The programme for this event is now online.](#) Book your place now for the Natural Capital Initiative's 10th anniversary summit. The summit offers an independent platform for people in science, policy, NGOs, businesses and local communities to discuss and debate innovative natural capital solutions that enhance the environment and strengthen society.

And finally...

[How Imagination Will Save Our Cities](#)

Scientists might need to take a cue from artists to adapt our cities for climate change.

Royal Society of Biology

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