

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

19 December 2018

Dear readers, the newsletter team will be taking a break for Christmas, and we will return with the next edition on the week commencing the 7 January 2019.

### News

#### Top stories

##### [Home Secretary announces new skills-based immigration system](#)

The Home Secretary announces a new route for skilled workers, strengthened border security and an end to free movement as part of a new immigration system.

#### Health and biomedicine

##### [‘Transmissible’ Alzheimer’s theory gains traction](#)

Mouse tests confirm that sticky proteins associated with degenerative brain diseases can be transferred — but researchers say risks for humans are likely to be minimal.

##### [Health and Social Care \(National Data Guardian\) Bill: Lords third reading](#)

The Health and Social Care (National Data Guardian) Bill had its third reading, a chance to 'tidy up' the bill and make changes, in the Lords on Wednesday 12 December.

##### [Global funding for tuberculosis research hits all-time high](#)

But investment still falls short of the US\$2 billion needed each year to eliminate the disease by 2030.

#### Food and drink

##### [FSA food standards review highlights failures](#)

Food standards delivery in the United Kingdom is hampered by inadequate resources and an out of date approach to regulation, according to the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

##### [GC responds to the FSA review of food standards delivery](#)

The Government Chemist team responds to the Food Standards Agency review on how food standards work is delivered across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### [Government Chemist work regarding management of food allergens](#)

Summary of recent activities that the Government Chemist has engaged in recently in the area of food allergen management.

### [Setting standards for the import and export of food](#)

The Government Chemist made a contribution into an international committee dealing with setting standards for the import and export of food.

### [First Dutch bananas could help tackle worldwide fungal threat](#)

University grows 60 plants on coco peat and rock wool, avoiding soil-borne disease.

## Agriculture and fisheries

### [Over 95% of Basic Payments 2018 paid to farm businesses](#)

Over 95% of farm businesses have been paid either their Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) claims or BPS loan applications during the first week of the BPS 2018 payment window, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, confirmed today [11 December].

### [Dame Glenys Stacey review proposes farm regulation shake-up](#)

A more supportive, flexible and incentives-led approach to farming regulation has been recommended as part of a review into the sector published today [13 December].

### [Bovine TB: biosecurity progress report 2018](#)

This report assesses progress against the 2014 Biosecurity Action Plan and sets out a new action plan for improving biosecurity.

### [Committee demands action on Government's strategy for NI's fisheries post-Brexit](#)

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has written to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs seeking more detail on crucial elements of strategy, after Government response to Committee's report fails to match urgency of crisis facing NI's fisheries.

## Water and air

### [Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2017 report released](#)

The 'Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2017' statistical report was today [13 December] published by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

## Climate and energy

### [Climate change: Five things we've learnt from COP24](#)

### [UN climate change talks avoid contentious issues in draft agreement](#)

Struggles remain on enacting 2015 Paris accord despite more clarity on emissions.

### [UN climate accord 'inadequate' and lacks urgency, experts warn](#)

Agreement will fail to halt devastating rise in global temperature, say scientists.

### [How green was the Budget?](#)

The Environmental Audit Committee holds a one-off session to scrutinise the green credentials of the Government's proposals for tax changes and spending commitments outlined in the 2018 Budget, as well as asking what the Government missed out in light of the Clean Growth Strategy.

### [UK deepens climate change partnership with Pacific Islands](#)

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry has committed funding to help support Pacific Islands in their work against climate change.

### [World-first carbon 'net-zero' hub of heavy industry to help UK seize global economic opportunities of clean growth](#)

At COP24 climate talks in Poland, UK government sets world-leading ambition for first 'net-zero carbon' cluster by 2040 to cut emissions, backed by up to £170 million funding.

### [China demands developed countries 'pay their debts' on climate change](#)

Key sticking point at UN negotiations is how countries should account for their greenhouse gas emissions.

### [Massive ocean carbon sink spotted burping CO2 on the sly](#)

Data from robotic ocean floats reveal that waters off Antarctica don't absorb as much carbon as scientists thought.

### [UK fracking policy faces court challenges](#)

Friends of the Earth granted judicial review it hopes will help alter planning rules.

## **Waste**

### [Gove launches landmark blueprint for resources and waste](#)

Businesses and manufacturers to pay the full cost of recycling or disposing of their packaging waste under government's Resources and Waste Strategy.

### [Legal plastic content in animal feed could harm human health, experts warn](#)

Small bits of plastic packaging from waste food make their way into animal feed as part of the UK's permitted recycling process.

## **Research funding and higher education policy**

### [UKRI marks the centenary of Haldane](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) celebrated the centenary of the publication of the Haldane Report last night, at an event to discuss the principles that emerged from the report, their influence and how they can be applied to today's challenges.

### [£24 million for new research into major environmental topics](#)

New research on major environmental issues, such as the impact of microplastics in our oceans, the UK potential for geothermal power and mitigating climate change, have been funded under the fourth round of NERC highlight topics.

### [We're \[Wellcome\] changing the way we fund early career researchers](#)

We are extending our partnership with the Academy of Medical Sciences to £8.3 million to support early career researchers moving into an independent role. Alongside this, we're going to close our Seed Awards in Science in March 2019.

### [EU15 central to Horizon 2020 collaboration, study confirms](#)

The EU's older 15 member states form the core of collaborations in the bloc's Horizon 2020 R&D programme, an analysis by the European Commission's science service has found.

## Open access and publication policy

### [Academies back Plan S, but with 'major caveats'](#)

The European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, Allea, has welcomed the "bold ambition" of the controversial open-access initiative Plan S, but stressed the need for research evaluation to be reformed and for young researchers to be supported.

## Business and industry

### [The power of research and innovation partnerships](#)

The world is changing, and changing fast. Our population is growing, people are living longer, our climate is changing, and our energy supplies and food resource is running low.

## Ethics

### [Baby gene edits could affect a range of traits](#)

Gene targeted for its role in HIV is linked to increased severity of other infectious diseases — and has implications for learning in mice.

## Public engagement

### [Why we're \[Wellcome\] supporting public engagement beyond the UK](#)

The case for good public engagement in low- and middle-income countries is strong. But why, and what is Wellcome doing to ensure that our public engagement work makes a difference outside the UK?

## International news

### [South Korean scientists protest treatment of university president accused of misusing funds](#)

The science ministry alleges that KAIST leader Shin Sung-Chul made illegal payments to a California lab, but many scientists see a political purge.

### [Italian scientists protest funding for vaccine-safety investigation](#)

The National Order of Biologists made a €10,000 donation to a group that questions the safety of vaccines.

### [China introduces 'social' punishments for scientific misconduct](#)

Offending researchers could face restrictions on jobs, loans and business opportunities under a system tied to the controversial social credit policy.

## [NIH considers restrictions to counter foreign influence in research](#)

An agency working group advises stronger security measures, but raises concerns about stigmatizing foreign researchers in the United States.

## Opinion

### [Governments at COP24 should focus on building a global electricity grid – Prof. Damien Ernst](#)

Governments at the COP24 climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, which ends on 14 December, should tackle fossil-fuel reliance by building a global energy grid that connects renewable energy from all around the world - and the best place to start is with a giant wind farm in Greenland, says Professor Damien Ernst, an energy scientist from the University of Liège, Belgium.

## Other

### [Synthetic biology: Where are we now and where are we going?](#)

The Royal Society, the Wellcome Trust and the African Academy of Sciences co-hosted a side event on synthetic biology at the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to help delegates better understand current and future applications and regulations for these technologies.

### [Looking into a crystal ball for clinical research and development](#)

## People

### [Directors appointed to lead work on Ageing Society grand challenge](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has today (13 December) confirmed the appointment two challenge directors who will lead work on the Ageing Society challenges of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF).

## Committee vacancies

### [Trustee / Council member - Royal Society of Biology](#)

Help lead the Royal Society of Biology

The Royal Society of Biology is seeking a new Trustee to serve a minimum four year term. The Trustees set the strategic direction and provide a key leadership role in ensuring the Society meets its charitable aims and objectives through its current, and future, three year business plan. You will be joining a senior level Board covering all aspects of bioscience from macro-systems to whole organisms to the molecular biosciences.

Applications close 11 January 2019.

## Opportunities

### [School Biology Teacher of the Year Award](#)

Are you (or do you know) an amazing biology teacher? The Royal Society of Biology's School Biology Teacher of the Year Award aims to recognise outstanding and inspirational biology teachers. Visit the Society's website for further details.

Nominations for the 2019 award close on **21 December 2018**.

### [STEM for BRITAIN](#)

STEM for BRITAIN Exhibition of Posters by early-career research scientists, engineers and mathematicians (formerly SET for BRITAIN)

The final of the 2019 STEM for BRITAIN event will take place at the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, Westminster on Wednesday, 13th March 2019, sponsored by Stephen Metcalfe MP, Chairman of the STEM for BRITAIN organising group of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

**Applications close 4 January 2019.**

### [HE Bioscience Technician of the Year 2019 open for nominations](#)

The Higher Education Bioscience Technician of the Year Award has launched again for 2019. The award recognises dedicated technical staff who are carrying out superb work underpinning research and teaching at all levels in universities across the UK and Ireland. The award is open to all technical staff, at any stage in their career, employed in a teaching, research or management role in the HE bioscience sector.

**Closes 11 January 2019.**

### [Join the Food Standards Agency's expert committees and help us ensure food safety](#)

The Food Standards Agency is seeking new members to join its Scientific Advisory Committees, to provide independent, expert advice, helping to ensure food produced or sold in the UK is safe and effectively regulated.

Apply now for an opportunity to contribute directly to protecting UK consumers and effective, science-based regulation of food.

**The closing date for applications is: Friday 4 January 2019.**

### [Royal Society of Biology 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 to attend a biology-related project or conference. Learn new lab and field techniques, gain professional development skills, and network with international academics with the support of a travel grant. Please visit the Society's [website](#) for further information and to read reports from [previous grant recipients](#). The deadline for applications is **1 March 2019**.

## Consultations

### [Evaluation of the legislation on medicines for children and rare diseases \(medicines for special populations\)](#)

Closes 4 January 2019.

### [Shortage occupation list 2018: call for evidence](#)

Closes 6 January 2019.

### [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\): call for experts to review Special Report on Climate Change and Land](#)

BEIS invites UK experts to register their interest in reviewing the Second Order Draft of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land.

Closes 7 January.

### [Committee calls for ideas from the public](#)

The Science and Technology Committee has decided again to create an open opportunity for the science community and the wider public to suggest science and

technology areas for scrutiny.  
Closes 8 January 2019.

### [Biodiversity net gain: updating planning requirements](#)

Closes 10 February 2019.

### [Mental health of men and boys: inquiry launched](#)

The Women and Equalities Committee launches a new inquiry into the mental health of men and boys Ahead of International Men's Day (Monday 20 November).  
Closes 18 February 2019.

### [Sustainability of the fashion industry inquiry launched](#)

The Environmental Audit Committee investigates the social and environmental impact of disposable 'fast fashion' and the wider clothing industry.

### [Revising the rules for free allocation in the EU Emissions Trading System](#)

Closes 22 February 2019.

### [How should Wellcome best support science to achieve our mission of improving health?](#)

We're launching a review of how Wellcome supports science. Jeremy Farrar explains why it's necessary and what we hope to achieve.

### [Evaluation of the Eel Regulation](#)

Closes 8 March 2019.

### [Evaluation of the feed additives Regulation](#)

Closes 3 April 2019.

## Events

### [New to Teaching Bioscience in Higher Education](#)

9 January, Edinburgh

This one-day workshop is for newcomers and relative newcomers to university teaching in the biosciences.

### [Antimicrobial Chemotherapy Conference 2019: An ABC for everyone involved in developing new antimicrobials.](#)

15 January 2019, London.

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

21-22 May 2019, The Crystal, London

Our call for sessions, speed talks and posters has been extended until Friday 30 November. Please send your proposals to [secretariat@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk) using our short submission [form](#).

## And finally...

### [Dracula ant's killer jaws are nature's fastest mover at 200mph](#)

Tropical insect uses lethal speed of its spring-loaded mandibles to stun or kill prey.

## [The Biologist](#)

In the latest issue, we look at how [octopus and cuttlefish use remarkable light-sensing skin to match their background](#) in a fraction of a second. We also visit a [‘forest from the future’](#) in Staffordshire - bathed in the CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations expected in 2050 - and *David Kuntin provides his top tips on how labs can reduce their plastic waste*. Members can download the full issue [here](#).

## **RSB Policy communication in 2018**

Within policy work on behalf of the community during 2018 we have responded to [19 consultations](#) across a wide-range of science and education policy topics, giving oral [evidence](#) to the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy inquiry, and organised a large number of events including [Voice of the Future](#), events to support [diversity and inclusion](#) across the biosciences, and our popular [Policy Lates](#) series. In addition we have offered public comment and helped to keep our readers up to date on science policy news with over 20 [policy news stories](#) on the website and delving into deeper detail on our [blog](#). Alongside this weekly newsletter we publish a monthly Research Dissemination Newsletter and a monthly Plant Science Newsletter, please subscribe. Our work can only be achieved with the help of RSB colleagues and our community of members and Member Organisations, we would like to extend to you, our best wishes for the holiday season and newsletters will resume on January 8 2019.

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