

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

8 January 2019

A very happy New Year to all of our readers. We look forward to providing you with weekly curated news across the bioscience policy landscape, in 2019.

News

Top stories

[University leaders warn against No Deal as vital research comes under threat](#)

Royal Society of Biology news

[RSB members recognised in 2019 New Year's honours list](#)

A number of Members and Fellows of the RSB have been recognised for their bioscience and community work in the 2019 New Year's Honours List.

Health and biomedicine

[Gene variations that reduce ability to store fat around the hips linked to higher risk of diabetes and heart attacks](#)

[Why we need a globally coordinated approach to preparing for epidemics](#)

At \$60 billion a year, not preparing for epidemics costs far more than putting the systems in place to prevent infectious diseases from spreading around the globe. Here's why.

[10 ways remarkable research is protecting health](#)

Throughout 2018 we've [Wellcome Trust] featured stories about trailblazing research by the people we support. Here are some of the highlights.

[AI face-scanning app spots signs of rare genetic disorders](#)

Deep-learning algorithm helps to diagnose conditions that aren't readily apparent to doctors or researchers.

Agriculture and fishery

[Emergency EU aid for farmers to be sought for Brexit fallout](#)

'No-deal' UK withdrawal would lead to massive losses for farmers.

[Oxford Farming Conference 2019 address by the Environment Secretary](#)

Michael Gove: British farmers can take advantage of the opportunities provided by Brexit and continue to export great British produce.

[Fair funding for farmers across all parts of the UK](#)

Independent panel will look at how funding supports the needs of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

[Domestic farm support funding: reviewing distribution across the UK from 2020 to the end of the parliament](#)

[Genetically modified 'shortcut' boosts plant growth by 40%](#)

Forestry

[Communities to have greater say in protecting local trees](#)

Michael Gove launches consultation on plans to create greater protections for trees in urban areas.

Environment and ecology

[15 biggest emerging trends and threats to biodiversity in 2019](#)

Experts have identified the emerging but little understood trends that could have a big impact on the natural world in 2019.

Water and air

[Thames Water fined £2m for “foreseeable and avoidable” pollution](#)

Oxfordshire water contamination "reckless failure" - judge.

[Trees can help mitigate ammonia emissions from farming](#)

A new online calculator and guidance has been developed to help farmers and others to design woodlands to capture airborne ammonia, and so reduce air pollution.

Climate and energy

[EU's electricity market revamp hailed as 'game-changer' for clean energy](#)

A recent agreement to reform Europe's electricity market has enshrined into EU law the unprecedented right of consumers to produce, sell and share their own electricity in newly-defined "citizen energy communities".

Waste

[Gove appoints Food Waste Champion](#)

Ben Elliot appointed as government's first Food Surplus and Waste Champion to help promote awareness of the issue of food waste.

[Plastic carrier bags: Gove sets out new measures to extend charge](#)

Government launches consultation to extend the 5p plastic bag charge to all retailers and increase the charge to 10p.

Government and Parliament

[World-leading UK Ivory Bill becomes law](#)

The Ivory Bill has gained Royal Assent to become law. The Act is expected to come into force in late 2019.

Research funding and higher education policy

[Research: the relationship between spending and performance](#)

An econometric analysis by Rand Europe examining the relationship between research spending and research performance.

[Research funding bodies: review of good practice in organisational design and governance](#)

This study presents a review of international evidence on best practice in organisational design of research and innovation funding bodies.

[Science and innovation audits: first wave reports](#)

Explains the science and innovation audits and presents the results from the first 5 audits.

[Research Excellence Framework review](#)

An independent review of university research funding by Lord Nicholas Stern.

[New data lay bare Europe's gender gap for STEM graduates](#)

However, latest data from EU suggests eastern European nations having more success in keeping gap narrow.

Open access and publication policy

[Peer review: how to be a good referee](#)

Peer review is lauded in principle as the guarantor of quality in academic publishing and grant distribution. But its practice is often loathed by those on the receiving end. Here, seven academics offer their tips on good refereeing, and reflect on how it may change in the years to come.

Diversity and inclusion

[Study ties depression in poorer students to social isolation](#)

Australian researchers recommend 'organic' interventions to support undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ethics

[Scanning the horizon, one song at a time](#)

International news

[Pakistan and Egypt had highest rises in research output in 2018](#)

Global production of scientific papers hit an all-time high this year, estimates show, with emerging economies rising fastest.

[World's first no-kill eggs go on sale in Berlin](#)

Chick's sex can be determined before it hatches, potentially ending culling of billions of males.

[Donald Trump finally has a White House science adviser](#)

Senate confirms meteorologist Kelvin Droegemeier to lead the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Opinion

[Basic research: 'as necessary as human curiosity' says brain scientist](#)

[Human genome editing: ask whether, not how](#)

The scientific community's response to the CRISPR twins should not pre-empt broader discussion across society, warns J. Benjamin Hurlbut.

Other

[Taking construction forward to a radical future](#)

[Unprovability comes to machine learning](#)

Scenarios have been discovered in which it is impossible to prove whether or not a machine-learning algorithm could solve a particular problem. This finding might have implications for both established and future learning algorithms.

[The science stories likely to make headlines in 2019](#)

People

[J. Evan Sadler, 1951-2018](#)

Tributes paid to leading haematologist who transformed our understanding of blood clotting.

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.

Closes: 11 January 2019

Opportunities

[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.

Closes: 11 January 2019

[Regional Food Programme opens for applications](#)

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has today announced the opening of the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme (NIRFP), a DAERA-funded programme to help raise the profile of quality regional food.

Closes: 6 February 2019

[Announcement of Opportunity: UK Clean Air Champion](#)

UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) is inviting applications for the role of UK Clean Air Champion.

Closes: 14 February 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.

Closes: 1 March 2019

Consultations

[25 year environment plan: measuring progress](#)

Closes: 25 January 2019

[Draft National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure](#)

Closes: 31 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

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

Closes: 22 February 2019

[Single use carrier bags: extending and increasing the charge](#)

Closes: 22 February 2019

[Tree and woodlands: introducing measures for felling street trees](#)

Closes: 28 February 2019

[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.

[How can we celebrate and support diversity in STEM - a younger perspective](#)

9 January, London

This event - the third NHLI Athena Lecture - is organised and will be introduced by Professor Sara Rankin (@RankinProf), Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI).

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

15 January 2019, London

[Learning from history: re-constructing changes in natural capital over the last century](#)

21 January 2019, London

[Bittersweet Brexit: Where are we heading with our food and farming?](#)

23 January 2019, London

The Centre for Food Policy's Food Thinkers series aims to advance the thinking and practice of integrated approaches to food policy.

[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 using our short submission [form](#).

And finally...

[Hastings dinosaur footprints exposed by cliff erosion](#)

[What to expect in 2019: science in the new year](#)

Gene-editing, open access and a biosafety rethink are set to shape research.

Royal Society of Biology

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