

Society of Biology

Statement on open access

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Today, the Rt Hon David Willetts MP made [a statement](#) on 'author pays' publishing, and welcomed the recent [Finch Report](#). The report, released by the working group on expanding access to published research findings, recommended that the UK should embrace the transition to open access, where research papers are made freely available after a number of months.

Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive of the Society of Biology, says: "Easy access to the published results of research funded by the public purse makes sense. We welcome the Finch report and the Government's response. But, this is a complex issue and the proposed model of 'author pays' needs flexibility both in the fee structure and the time allowed (so called embargo periods) before making texts available to all."

As a learned society with reader, author, reviewer, editor and publisher members, the Society of Biology views the issue of open access from the perspective of a wide variety of stakeholders. Our overriding objective is to support productive research for social benefit. Learned societies play a vital role in developing and enhancing the careers of talented researchers, and in creating an environment in which their research can flourish. The publication of journals by learned societies also maintains the high quality of academic publication.

Much of the support which learned societies provide comes from revenue from publishing. Most have the potential to provide high-quality open access journals at fair Author Publication Charges. However, to develop these new services whilst maintaining their support for research, it is important they are allowed the necessary time for the redesign and renegotiation of publishing practices to an open access model. The Finch report explicitly recognised this need and the role that learned societies play.

Dr Downs says: "There are over 70 scientific journals published by member organisations of the Society of Biology, all of whom use any surpluses generated to fulfil their charitable aims of education, professional training, public engagement and grants for scientific research. It is essential that the transition to the proposed author-pays model allows time for the current subscriber-pays model to evolve and develop and we welcome the Government's recognition that embargo periods may need to vary between disciplines."