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News

RSB news

[Successful Bioscience Careers Day sees winner of first ever RSB Science Communication competition announced](#)

Over 150 guests joined us for the RSB's Bioscience Careers Day events (BCD) in March, hearing from a selection of industry professionals about the variety of careers available to bioscience graduates.

[RSB Fellows elected to Royal Society of Edinburgh Fellowship](#)

The Royal Society of Biology offers its congratulations to two of its Fellows who have recently been elected as Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland's National Academy for the deployment of knowledge for public good.

Plant health and biosecurity

[Advanced tech boosts fight against animal and plant disease](#)

The Animal and Plant Health Agency has announced it has received £10 million in government funding for a surveillance programme to protect animals, plants, people and trade.

[Public attitudes to plant health revealed](#)

Forest Research discusses the results from a survey of over 7,000 people looking at levels of awareness and understanding of biosecurity and plant and tree health in the UK.

[Less than 1% of UK biosecurity budget goes on tackling invasive species, figures show](#)

According to the Guardian, a freedom of information request to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) by Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) shows only £2.47m of the estimated £250m government biosecurity budget was spent on tackling invasive species.

[Unusual yellow rust activity in spring 2025](#)

Writing for Niab, Dr Kostya Kanyuka, Head of Pathology, discusses the unusually high yellow rust levels on resistant wheat varieties this spring.

Climate change and globalization raise risks from crop pests

The Global Plant Council highlights research showing that rising temperatures are enabling plant pests to move further from the equator and to higher ground, while increased trade is accelerating the spread of invasive species.

Plant breeding

Pea breakthrough could transform global farming and sustainability

Scientists have created a powerful genetic map that could unlock vital traits to help develop more sustainable, resilient and nutritious pea crops worldwide, reports UKRI.

Agriculture

£50 million equipment and technology grants to boost food production and farm profitability

This government press release reports that farmers across England will be able to apply to grants totalling £50 million to improve access to new technology able to boost productivity, profitability and food security.

A Fifth of Global Farmland Contaminated by Toxic Metals, Study Reveals

Rothamsted Research highlights a study showing that nearly a fifth of the world's agricultural land is contaminated by toxic metals, posing a serious threat to food security, public health, and ecosystems.

Hope for agricultural revival on Chernobyl-affected land

The UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) highlights research suggesting that thousands of hectares of farmland in northern Ukraine that were considered too dangerous for cultivation following the Chernobyl disaster almost 40 years ago can safely return to agricultural production.

Climate Change Threatens UK Farmland's Ability to Protect Water Quality

Extreme winter rainfall—set to become more frequent with climate change—is overwhelming the ability of farmland to regulate pollution, putting water quality and aquatic ecosystems at growing risk, reports Rothamsted Research.

Biodiversity and conservation

Why bumble bees prefer yellow flowers to red – and why it matters for biodiversity

The John Innes Centre highlights research looking at bees preferences for different coloured flowers, and how this provides information on the flowers evolutionary pathway.

Map shows 80% of peatlands dry and degraded

New mapping data has shown 80% of England's peatlands to be dry and damaged, which risks increasing carbon emissions, reports BBC News.

Forestry

Boost for woodlands as research to tackle plant pests & diseases

British woodlands and trees will benefit from seventeen new research projects aimed at boosting protection against pests and diseases, according to this government press release.

Government ‘failing to support natural regeneration of trees in England’

According to the Guardian, recent figures show only 5% of Forestry Commission grants for woodland creation have been spent on the natural regeneration of trees, while the remaining 95% is spent on tree planting.

New pests and diseases will cut UK tree growth

This Science Daily article highlights research showing that the arrival of new plant pests and diseases is likely to severely damage UK trees and woodlands in the coming decades.

UK must grow more of its own wood to meet climate goals – new research

Writing for the Conversation, academics at Bangor University and University of Galway discuss the importance of increasing domestic wood production.

The satellite that will ‘weigh’ world’s 1.5 trillion trees

BBC News reports that a first-of-a-kind satellite has been launched with the hope of better understanding the importance of rainforests in storing carbon and the impact of deforestation.

Sustainability

Nature in cities is vital for improved health and climate resilience

This article from UKCEH highlights a study showing that ‘urban greening’ has a range of benefits including cooler streets, cleaner air and water, improved mental health and greater biodiversity.

How nettles are saving an endangered bird

Multiple tonne bags of nettles from across Northern Ireland have been shipped to Rathlin Island in an effort to support the endangered corncrake bird, reports BBC News.

Other news

AI system targets tree pollen behind allergies

This Science Daily article explains that new tools can significantly enhance the speed and accuracy of pollen classification, leading to a number of potential benefits.

Equipping the next generation of female leaders in wheat research

The John Innes Centre reports that twenty-nine career female wheat researchers from twelve different organisations undertook female leadership training as part of the Rosalind Franklin Women in Wheat Champions programme.

Opportunities

Plant Health Professional Register

Those working in plant health are encouraged to apply for the RSB’s **Plant Health Professional 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**.

Science Policy: Improving the Uptake of Research into UK Policy

Applications for the sixth Science Policy course (18-20 August 2025), organised by Wellcome Connecting Science, the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, Wellcome Sanger Institute and the Royal Society of Biology are open. Through expert presentations, discussion, group activities and networking course participants will develop a comprehensive understanding of how, and when, research can impact the process of creating policy. You can explore the programme and [**apply to the course online**](#).

Closes: 3 June 2025

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 [**Aseptic Techniques**](#), and [**Cell Culture: The Basics**](#) at the University of York on **3 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**.

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 6 July**](#).

Grow beans for science

Join a fun, nationwide citizen science project funded by an RSB Outreach and Engagement grant. Researchers at the University of Southampton are inviting 100 UK primary and secondary schools to grow beans, track their growth, and collect samples. Schools will receive full instructions, lesson plans, and possible support for garden setup.

Consultations

Factors Affecting Public Engagement by UK Researchers 2025

The Royal Society has commissioned a study on the factors affecting public engagement by UK researchers in 2025. The 2025 study follows on from similar surveys undertaken in [2006](#) and [2015](#), and will thereby serve to provide evidence of the development of the UK public engagement landscape over time.

Closes: 1 June 2025

Resilience to threats from animal disease

The Public Accounts Committee has launched an inquiry into the Resilience to threats from animal disease in England. The committee is welcoming evidence on topics including the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) ability to establish and manage the structures, systems and governance processes needed to ensure England's resilience to animal diseases. 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: 7 July 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

Plant Health Series: Summer Conference 2025

12 June 2025

10:00 – 15:45

Online (Zoom)

As part of the Royal Society of Biology's [Plant Health Series](#), this symposium will involve lectures and short flash talks from a range of professionals within the industry. There will also be opportunities to engage with different members of the plant health community, and build bridges across the many disciplines within this sector.

Halting biodiversity decline in agriculture

1 July 2025

11:30 – 13:00

Online (Zoom)

This webinar will explore how science can play a pivotal role in combating biodiversity loss in agriculture and shaping policy recommendations. This event is open to all and is relevant to those with an interest in natural capital, land management, and the relationships between agricultural production and biodiversity loss.

And finally...

How skunk cabbages and other smelly plants brew their foul odour

A sweeping study of smelly plants has revealed how skunk cabbage and several other plants concoct their malodorous aromas, reports Nature News.



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