

Royal Society of Biology

Strategy and three-year business plan
2022–2024

Contents

Welcome	3
Rationale	4
Partnership	6
Public benefit and impact	7
Deliverables 2022, 2023 and 2024	8
1. The wonder of Biology	8
2. Biologists	9
3. Biology in practice	10
4. #Biosciencesforall	11



Resourcing and supporting the plan	12
The road to net zero	12
Premises and IT infrastructure	12
Three-year financial plan	13
Risk management	14
Successful delivery of the strategy	14
Key deliverables	15
Contact details	15



OUR MISSION

Is to be a unifying voice for biology for the public benefit; to provide impartial evidence-based advice; to raise professional standards; to support biologists throughout their careers; to engage the public with our work; to support the bioscience community and to provide events and other fora for information exchange in the biosciences.

Welcome

to the Royal Society of Biology's plan for the next three years

◆ **Led by the [Board of Trustees](#), with engagement** from volunteers, members, staff and wider stakeholders, the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) has developed an ambitious plan for the three years to December 2024. As part of a ten-year vision for the Society, this plan builds on the impact of past achievements, ushering in an increased focus on professional development and member support across the UK regions and, gradually, internationally. There will be integrated evidence-based campaigning and a focus on quality through the RSB's role as the guardian of standards across many areas of operation, from [accreditation](#) of bioscience degrees to a fit-for-purpose [5-19 biology curriculum framework](#).

Through a large membership of individuals and a broad spectrum of Member Organisations, the RSB will use its convening power to facilitate coherent and considered messages, ensuring the voice of biology is clear and present. Biology is a broad subject spanning many sub-disciplines and unique and specific challenges will remain but, more often than not, it is a pan-science approach that provides solutions, opportunities and the route to influence, based on the best available evidence.

Biology must sit alongside chemistry, physics and mathematics as a partner in policy development; supporting decision-makers; inspiring the public; supporting the STEM community and acting as a custodian of quality.

TEN YEAR HORIZON

The next ten years to 2032 will see biology play an unprecedented role in addressing global challenges and in providing insights into the fundamental processes of life and the way in which organisms, ecosystems and natural resources interact, in order to benefit society, the economy and the long-term future of the planet.

We are seeking to play our part by bringing together diverse bioscience networks to provide a 'go-to'

destination for policymakers, biologists and the wider public. In doing this we will aim to drive up quality in educational processes and outputs, and ways of communicating biology and professional standards.

We will: champion discovery research alongside the application of biology and biologists themselves; have a clear ambition to reduce regional disparity in bioscience activity and understanding; develop a greater international profile; and ensure we are one of a limited number of authoritative, informed opinion providers in our subject.

THE LAST THREE YEARS: JANUARY 2019 TO DECEMBER 2021

During the previous three years the RSB has sought to [inspire](#), [influence](#), [support](#) and [evolve](#) while fulfilling a commitment to realising 'biosciences for all' through greater inclusion, access and diversity.

Our convening power and influence were clear across both science and education policy as the Home Office, Defra, BEIS, DfE and UK-wide parliamentarians engaged with us in areas as diverse as [animal science](#), [natural capital](#), genome editing and student assessment in a COVID-19 era.

The RSB's professional registers, training and accreditation provided support, enabling the spread of best practice, improved standards and access to professional development.

More than 60% of UK universities offering bioscience degrees now have at least one form of [RSB accreditation](#).

The RSB has continued to evolve, offering new and improved services for the sector in membership, grant management, event organisation and more. Our [strategic partners](#) have provided invaluable support, ensuring we can be an effective advocate and hub for information exchange, sharing knowledge from outreach practice to ways to promote and enhance diversity in our organisations and sector.

A detailed report on key performance indicators and impact is available [here](#).

VISION

Our vision is of
a world that values
biology's contribution
to improving
life for all

RATIONALE

In line with its [Royal Charter](#) and Mission, the RSB is aiming to build on renewed interest and engagement with the biosciences as a result of pandemics, climate change and a growing understanding of the value of nature and its interface with human health.

To respond to this opportunity, we hope to grow the number of people taking an active interest in biology through an increased membership, supporting biologists and inspiring would-be biologists and our communities with the wonder of biology, and through effective curricula and learning outcomes.

Often our role will be one of signposting to quality products and services, using our convening power to distil best practice or through setting rigorous standards. As a relatively small yet influential body the Society's resources will be focused where they can make the biggest difference, often partnering with Member Organisations or sister societies, especially in physics, chemistry and mathematics. Biomedical science will be additionally supported through specialist committees and groups covering both [animal](#) and [plant](#) science. Natural capital and nature-based solutions will continue to be a focus for the RSB's special interest

group the [Natural Capital Initiative](#). The Society will take a keen and active interest in environmental issues and the intrinsic link with agriculture and biodiversity.

This new plan envisages a shift to higher profile integrated and evidence-based campaigning, presenting the case to a variety of audiences to inform debate and influence outcomes. As the UK seeks to realise 2.4% of GDP and aims for 3% investment in R&D, our engagement with employers will need to grow, both in academia and industry, to ensure the Society's professional development, careers advice and knowledge of skills requirements are fit for purpose. Skills shortages will be highlighted as they emerge, alongside the importance of interdisciplinary research and its applications, such as in agriculture and other areas that are often under-valued yet critical elements of the economy.

With many effective providers of educational support and outreach material operating in the STEM space, we will move towards signposting and a focus on education policy, continuing to co-ordinate the collaborative agenda through the jointly-funded [STEM Education Alliance](#) in England and Wales, and as a member of the [Learned Societies' Group](#) in Scotland.



Values

Vocal: we are a strong voice for biology

Advancing: we advance interest, education, professional development and policy in the biosciences through

our membership, staff and volunteers

Leading: we consult and represent our profession with a proactive and honest approach to the public, governments and policymakers

Uniting: we bring together individuals and organisations to promote our vision, enhance quality and develop standards

Evolving: we enhance and develop our

resources to meet the evolving needs of the sector, our membership and the UK

Inclusive: we promote diversity and equality for all in the biosciences

Inspiring: we aim to inspire our members and the wider public with the wonders of biology through effective communication and engagement



With many effective providers of educational support and outreach material operating in the STEM space, we will move towards signposting resourcing and a focus on education policy

A wider range of grants to support public engagement for our [branches](#) and individual members will be developed while enhancing further the annual flagship ‘[Biology Week](#)’ each October.

To support the bioscience (and related) learned society sector we will grow the services offered to other biology-focused organisations, on a largely cost-recovery basis, with the [Membership Client Services team](#) covering areas such as event provision, membership management and shared RSB-developed software to support these activities.

Membership will remain at the heart of the Society, with an ambition to exceed 20,000 individual members and to develop a simpler and better focused Member Organisation structure, to increase value, communicate benefits and broaden representation well beyond one hundred organisations. [Training](#) products and CPD systems will be refreshed to support professional development alongside continued promotion of existing [registers](#) such as [Chartered Science Teacher](#) and newer designations such as [Plant Health Professional](#). [Chartered Biologist](#), in particular, will be enhanced to ensure it is a ‘gold standard’ for working biologists. Professional registration will also continue to provide support and

recognition of technicians at all levels and in specialist areas such as plant health.

[The Biologist](#), our award-winning membership magazine, will continue to be a key quarterly output, supplemented by more frequent and accessible online content covering the latest news and with engaging real-world examples of biology and biologists. The RSB [publications portfolio](#) will grow and, wherever possible, content will be linked to learning, training, outreach and press work to maximise its value.

The separate strand of work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, ‘Biosciences for all’, will continue internally and in partnership with our Member Organisation network externally, and especially with strategic partners. A detailed roadmap will be developed and the Science Council and Royal Academy of Engineering’s [Diversity and Inclusion Progression Framework](#) used as a common tool to benchmark progress. Subject to successful funding bids, new focused programmes will be developed to realise on-the-ground change. Specialist networks and broader pan-science groups will be a key part of ensuring cross-learning, helping to minimise replication of effort.



PARTNERSHIP

The Society will seek to enhance delivery of this strategy through partnership wherever possible. The boundaries between biology disciplines and other core sciences are increasingly blurred and the greatest benefit for biology often flows from research that is pan-science. This is especially evident in science and education policy, and funding, and the application of science and data to local and global issues.

The RSB will continue to work closely with the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry to ensure joined-up

thinking on the many areas of common interest wherever possible and to ensure the voice of biology is an equal partner to the physical sciences. Input will draw on the expertise and knowledge of the individual membership, Member Organisations, staff and volunteers and will form a core element of the Society's advocacy role to policymakers and the public.

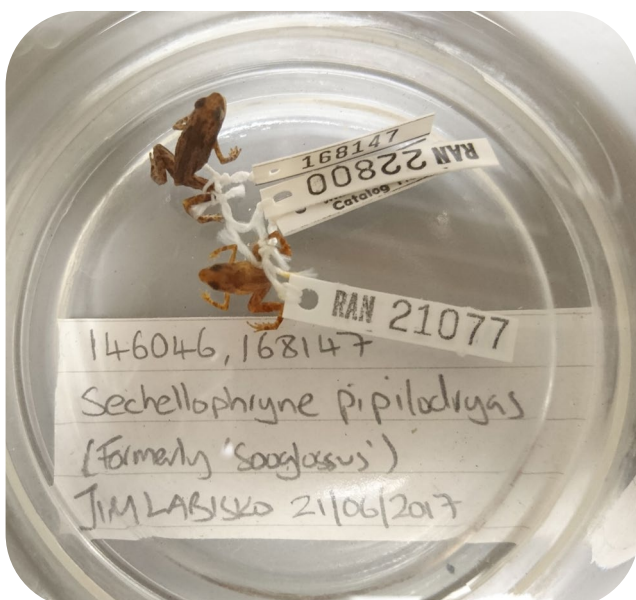
We will work with our strategic partners to support their specific aims wherever possible and seek to deliver RSB goals through expert partner bodies, such as the Science Media Centre, Science Council, and [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Science and Health](#).



PUBLIC BENEFIT AND IMPACT

Effective public policy relies on a solid evidence base and implementation by skilled individuals, alongside informed public debate with well-communicated information. As the national body for biology, incorporated by Royal Charter with charitable objects, the RSB is ideally placed to contribute in each of these objectives for the biosciences.

The variety of RSB membership is a core strength, with knowledge and skills from all sectors, careers, communities and sub-disciplines of biology. This allows development of policy positions informed by diversity with the [RSB Policy Resource Library](#) as a public, searchable resource. It also ensures a 'helicopter perspective' on the requirement for biology education in the 5-19 age range and beyond. By influencing curricula and degree learning outcomes, while insisting on professional standards and CPD and inspiring the population with the



wonder of biology, the RSB is contributing to an ongoing pipeline of new and continually up-to-date professional biologists, who in turn contribute to public benefit, from water quality to food standards to genome sequencing.

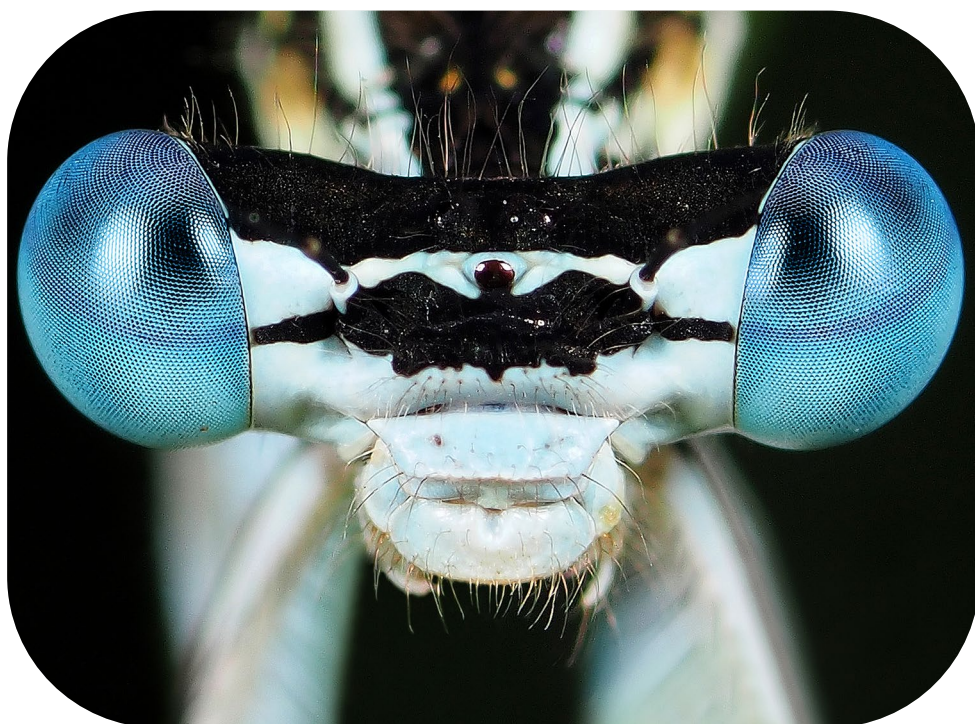
Via work linking health and the environment we are able to change perception around the value of nature and biodiversity, and through work on the legislative framework or the use of [animals in research](#) and via [profiling plant science](#) and bioscientists more generally, the RSB is directly influencing the ability of the UK to develop a better understanding of areas as different as healthcare interventions, new medicines and food security.

Deliverables 2022, 2023 and 2024

This plan packages activity in four key areas building on the themes from 2019-2021: inspire, influence, support, evolve

1. THE WONDER OF BIOLOGY

Biology is the science of life in all its forms, from the smallest microbe to humans. It encompasses biology at the molecular level, including disciplines such as biochemistry, immunology and pharmacology to the microbiology of simple organisms, to large animals, plants and the ecosystems they form. RSB will celebrate this breadth and its amazing complexity, in every aspect of life, to contribute to an increased national understanding of the value of biology and its importance in addressing global challenges, such as disease, food security or climate change.

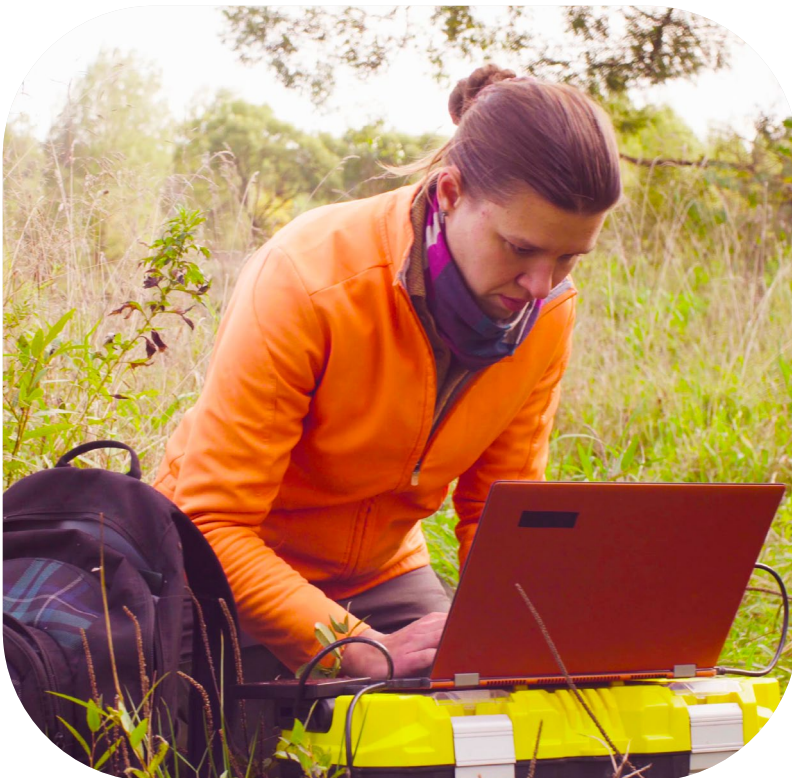
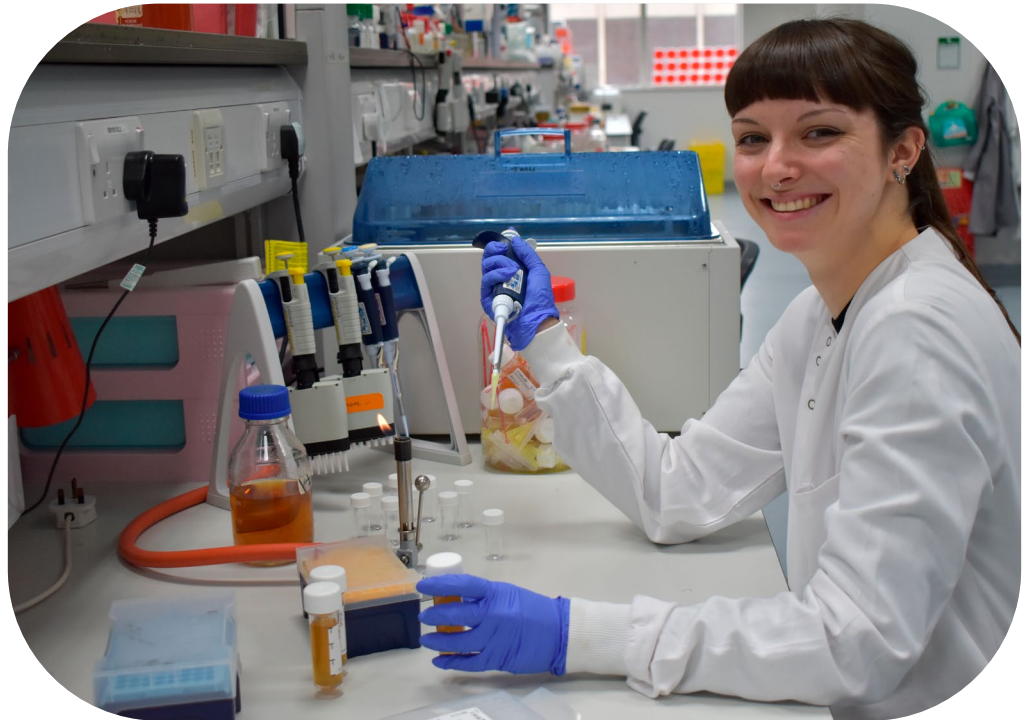


Programmes of work and key deliverables:

- Continue to run a national 'Biology Week' in each October of the plan years with a year-on-year improvement, growing positive feedback as a centrepiece for inspiring a range of audiences with the wonder of biology.
- Develop a proactive press and digital media campaign around articles and interviews within *The Biologist*, and more widely, to showcase bioscience and the impact of the Society.
- Launch a new and expanded outreach grant programme by June 2023 to enable individual members and RSB branches to deliver outreach events.
- Establish a quality control roadmap by December 2023 to identify and promote RSB endorsed products, services or toolkits aimed at helping engage the public with the science and wonder of biology.
- Run an annual programme of parliamentary engagement that highlights the impact and value of biology (and biologists), and where appropriate STEM, to the social, health, economic and intellectual value of the UK.

2. BIOLOGISTS

The RSB will support biology and biologists at all stages of their career and study from school to retirement and across all sub-disciplines and fields of work. We will also welcome anyone interested in biology whether as a career or for personal development and increased understanding. Primary routes will be individual membership, professional registration and through training opportunities, but also through bringing together the networks and opportunities made available by the Society's Member Organisations.



Programmes of work and key deliverables:

- Maintain retention rates across the individual membership grades and increase applications to achieve a membership of at least 20,000 by the plan end.
- Develop a new framework to better engage, and grow, the Member Organisation network, increasing breadth and enhancing advocacy.
- Roll out the 5-19 age-range biology curriculum framework
- Review the breadth of career support available to biologists and those considering entering the field, in order to better signpost and promote high standards and quality services, no later than December 2023.
- Utilise special interest groups, specialist committees and focus groups to improve individual member and Member Organisation engagement with the work of the RSB, adding value to both the Society and its membership, especially in the development of science policy positions, and in support of integrated campaigns.

3. BIOLOGY IN PRACTICE

The RSB is able to play a central role in setting standards, facilitating improved quality and greater societal impact. Developing stronger employer links and maintaining a detailed understanding of bioscience teaching, research delivery and ongoing application of skills, including through apprenticeships, is a core activity for the RSB.

We will share best practice and help UK and other universities to better meet employer needs through accreditation of bioscience degrees, professional registration, CPD and public recognition of success.

We will advise governments and policymakers on issues of the day and proactively campaign for legislation, regulation, guidance and debate in the priority areas we identify.



Programmes of work and key deliverables:

- Launch two integrated campaigns over the course of the plan to support joined-up and evidence-based thinking in UK governments' policy positions for both genetic technologies and biosecurity.
- Ensure at least ten universities apply for international accreditation and consultancy by December 2023.
- Increase the number of eligible UK universities offering at least one RSB accredited degree programme to 75% or more.
- Develop Chartered Biologist as a gold-standard professional recognition with compulsory CPD for all registrants by December 2022.
- Launch at least two university partnerships to deliver Technical Skills Courses by the end of 2023.
- Develop an engaged and effective employer network to inform and hone relevant areas of the Society's work.
- Develop a process for measuring, monitoring and reducing the Society's own environmental impact and consider options for bringing together actions and best practice among the Member Organisation, individual membership and wider bioscience communities.

4. #BIOSCIENCESFORALL

We are committed to assessing our progress to improve diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work and benchmarking within the sector. As part of this endeavour we will seek to improve the historic gender imbalance in the professional grades, especially at the level of Fellow.

The already established network of EDI champions on each of our committees and groups will ensure positive movement and the EDI Working Group of RSB Member Organisations will be used to develop ideas and best practice and act as a sounding board for potential action to improve inclusion and diversity across all characteristics and areas.



Programmes of work and key deliverables:

- By the end of the plan achieve clear progress towards full inclusivity and diversity, as an organisation, using external benchmarks where possible.
- Through targeted approaches, better promotion, and communication, seek to redress current imbalances and achieve annual elections of members, especially Fellows, more representative of the bioscience community.
- By December 2023 launch an annual programme of activity to achieve clearly defined outcomes to drive forward bioscience inclusion, both externally and within RSB.

Resourcing and supporting the plan

Finance and infrastructure for the next three years



OUR COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE AND NATURE

The climate emergency and associated biodiversity loss require urgent action. The RSB will advocate for real and rapid change, providing information, signposting and opinion to policymakers. Often work will be in partnership via contributions to national and supranational work. To do this credibly the Society must take action as the national umbrella body for biology – as must the sector as a whole.

Many factors limit or enhance the ability to act, but by measuring impact and

developing a route to achieving challenging goals, both RSB and the sector can move towards net zero and nature benefits, decarbonising activity, or offsetting impact as appropriate.

As well as developing an internal programme of action, the Society will work with Member Organisations, and potentially with individual members, to develop a collective roadmap of action with annual reporting within an agreed framework, developed with flexibility and the recognition of organisation difference.

PREMISES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

RSB is committed to remaining at the 1 Naoroji Street office for the duration of the plan, given lease commitments and past investment in infrastructure. Through use of cloud-based technology, staff will continue to work remotely some days and utilise hot-desking to allow alternative use of facilities, including the opportunity for revenue generation through desk and room hire. As the umbrella body for biology, providing reasonably priced facilities to other science bodies will also help to deliver strategic ambitions around impact

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The extent of
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for the bioscience community, especially RSB Member Organisations and partners.

Membership client services will see modest growth through to 2024 with an increasingly proactive approach to ensure more bioscience and science organisations benefit from RSB’s historic investment in common database and related services. This will create economy of scale, enhanced networks, financial efficiency and wider impact.

The extent of hot-desking, home working and facility hire will be monitored and adjusted, as required, to support and deliver this plan to best effect.

IT infrastructure will also be further developed leading to a new in-house CRM (MARVIN 2.0) integrated with the new RSB management accounting software and website, including new approaches to member access and online engagement. Use of these platforms will also be offered to membership clients as appropriate.

THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

A three-year financial plan underpins delivery of this strategy, including the maintenance of RSB financial security. Funds will remain in a readily-available investment portfolio, and instant access accounts for working capital, ensuring high liquidity from a low- to medium-risk investment strategy.

Cash flow is anticipated to remain strong with a minimum of 6-12 months operating costs in reserve across the period. Inflation risks are costed in at around 3% on average across the term with a target of retaining staff cost at 55%-60% of total income. Each year of the plan is expected to deliver a break-even year end with modest surplus likely.

Some income diversification to continue to reduce reliance on individual and Member Organisation income is planned, but these will still generate the majority of income during the period to the end of 2024.

Annual budgets over three years to December 2024

Organisation Headlines	Annual Budget 2022 Total	Annual Budget 2023 Total	Annual Budget 2024 Total
Income			
Individual Membership	£1,430,890	£1,523,253	£1,616,476
Organisation Membership	£306,975	£306,975	£306,975
MO Services Income	£168,500	£176,000	£183,500
Registers and Exams	£195,816	£195,816	£195,816
Grants/Donations	£56,500	£56,500	£56,500
Accreditation Fees	£433,800	£460,000	£492,800
Publication Sales/JBE Sales	£29,600	£29,600	£31,000
Sponsorship & Conference	£116,100	£106,100	£96,100
Investment Income	£33,660	£34,660	£35,709
Course fees, grants, other	£83,084	£129,084	£115,084
Total Income	£2,854,925	£3,017,988	£3,129,960
Expenditure			
Staff Costs	£1,562,481	£1,647,240	£1,696,340
Printing & Postage	£11,850	£12,000	£12,500
Travel/Subsistence/Staff training	£72,025	£73,275	£78,625
Project Costs Inc. Accreditation, HUBS	£206,350	£206,350	£216,350
Consultancy Fees: esp Regs & Accr	£76,002	£78,000	£81,002
Outsourcing	£139,810	£128,210	£128,210
Professional Fees – Accountancy/Legal	£23,600	£24,600	£29,600
Premises & Equipment – 1NS costs & rooms	£387,711	£404,211	£410,911
Office Costs	£92,965	£94,205	£104,305
IT Support, Licences & Website	£113,460	£115,000	£120,060
Governance Costs	£59,180	£59,680	£60,430
VAT & Depreciation	£97,000	£100,000	£102,000
Contingency	£5,000	£10,000	£20,000
Additional Pensions	£11,000	£11,000	£11,000
Additional Inflation		£38,865	£40,319
Relocation			
Total Expenditure	£2,858,434	£3,002,636	£3,111,652
Operational Surplus/(Deficit)	-£3,509	£15,352	£18,308



RISK MANAGEMENT

The Society maintains a risk register which is regularly reviewed by the senior management team, Audit Committee and Council. The key risks identified for the period of this plan are:

- Maintaining and growing membership through a period of economic uncertainty following the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and adjustments following departure from the European Union: this will be mitigated through close monitoring, investment in additional membership staff and enhanced stakeholder engagement, adjusting expenditure to match unexpected trends and seeking to improve the overall 'membership offering'.
- Permanent changes to working practices and external engagement post-pandemic leading to unwanted support, services and activities: mitigation measures here will include innovative and different uses of the current office space, sharing and adopting sector best practice and listening and acting on the views of the membership across all regions and countries.
- National and international economic conditions including any significant rise in inflation creating both expenditure and income pressures: this will be addressed through flexibility and an ability to react to such pressures. The Society will maintain high liquidity with a low-to medium-risk investment portfolio ensuring strong cash flow throughout the period. Plans will also factor in inflation of at least 3%, on average, to ensure an annual break-even outcome.



We need to ensure provision of opportunities for the members of our community involved in delivery to continue to develop necessary skills

SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY – A BALANCED SCORECARD

A light-touch balanced scorecard approach will be used to maximise effectiveness of the strategy by delivering greater integration across themes linked to structure and staff/volunteers by ensuring:

1. Clarity of cause for all involved in the delivery of objectives which are key to our growth

The RSB is a central convening body for many communities across the breadth of the biosciences. A plan enabling clarity of cause for staff and volunteers must be instigated to create the focus needed to drive the RSB into the next stage of its growth journey over the next decade.

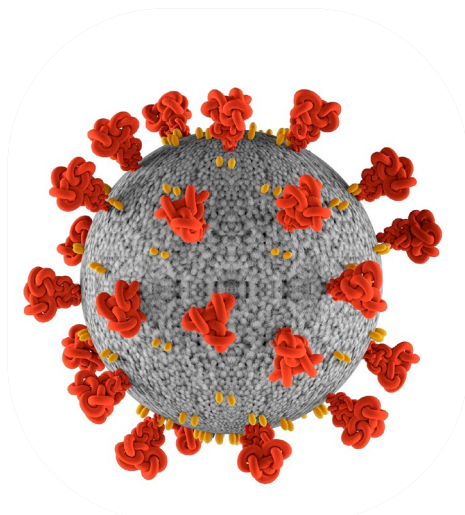
2. A fully connected community approach

The focused plan enabling clarity of cause described above will fail unless all parts of

the community collaborate to achieve delivery of the objectives which are key to growth. Therefore, the plan must incorporate methods for clear communication on input and progress to and from the defined aspects of our community involved in delivery of each objective.

3. Professional development of our community

In order to recruit and retain the expertise we require to collaborate on delivery of the objectives which are key to our growth, we need to ensure provision of opportunities for the members of our community involved in delivery to continue to develop necessary skills along the way. This is a step towards growth in itself, since an attractive environment offering professional development opportunities will attract those with the interest, expertise, experience and aptitude we need.



Key deliverables 2022-2024

WE WILL

- Continue to run a national 'Biology Week' as a way of inspiring a range of audiences with the wonder of biology
- Develop a proactive press and digital media campaign around articles to showcase *The Biologist*, bioscience and the impact of the Society
- Launch a new and expanded outreach grant programme
- Establish a quality control roadmap for resources that aim to engage the public with the science and wonder of biology
- Run an annual programme of parliamentary engagement that highlights the impact and value of biology and biologists
- Maintain retention rates across the individual membership grades and increase applications to achieve a membership of at least 20,000 by the plan end
- Develop a new framework to better engage, and grow, the Member Organisation network
- Roll out the 5-19 age-range biology curriculum framework
- Review the breadth of career support available to biologists
- Utilise special interest groups, specialist committees and focus groups to improve individual member and Member Organisation engagement with the work of the RSB and its membership
- Launch campaigns to support joined-up and evidence-based thinking in UK governments' policy positions for both genetic technologies and biosecurity
- Ensure at least 10 universities apply for international accreditation and consultancy
- Increase the number of eligible UK universities offering at least one RSB accredited degree programme to 75% or more
- Develop Chartered Biologist as a gold-standard professional recognition with compulsory CPD for all registrants
- Launch at least two university partnerships to deliver technical skills courses
- Develop an engaged and effective employer network
- Develop a process for measuring, monitoring and reducing the Society's own environmental impact
- Achieve clear progress towards full inclusivity and diversity as an organisation using external benchmarks where possible
- Seek to redress current imbalances and achieve elections of members, especially Fellows, more representative of the bioscience community
- Launch an annual programme of activity to drive forward bioscience inclusion

ABBREVIATIONS

BEIS

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in the UK

DEFRA

Department for Food and Rural Affairs in the UK

DfE

Department for Education in the UK

EDI

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

MO

Member Organisation

RSB

Royal Society of Biology

STEM

Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics

Website rsb.org.uk



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