

October 2024

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News

RSB news

[Unveiling the 'Biology for a Better Tomorrow' series with CWP: showcasing the biosciences as key to a sustainable future](#)

In a bold new initiative, the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) has partnered with media production company Content With Purpose (CWP) to launch 'Biology for a Better Tomorrow', a pioneering digital series designed to shine a spotlight on the indispensable role of biology in tackling global sustainability challenges.

[CEO of the Royal Society of Biology to retire](#)

Dr Mark Downs PhD DSc (Hon) CSci CBiol FRSB, Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Biology, has announced he will retire in September 2025.

[Awards, medals, and a new digital series at the RSB's Biology Week Awards Ceremony 2024](#)

The RSB celebrated its highly anticipated annual awards ceremony as one of the flagship events of Biology Week. Held at the Royal Geographical Society in South Kensington, London, the event was attended by over 100 guests.

[RSB Photography Competition winners 2024 – in pictures](#)

The winners of this year's photography competition have been announced. Selected from over 1,000 entries, nine were shortlisted in total with two amateur photographers chosen as winners; one for the RSB Photographer of the Year, and one for the RSB Young Photographer of the Year.

[Winners of BioArtAttack \(2D\) Award 2024 announced](#)

The BioArtAttack 2D award celebrates the combination of science and art in a 2D format to showcase careful observation of the natural world and the wonders of biology. The winning entries for 2024 have been announced.

Plant health and biosecurity

[World leading Animal and Plant Health Agency celebrates ten-year anniversary](#)

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is celebrating a decade of its efforts to safeguard both animal and plant health on the domestic and international stage, reports this Government press release.

[Nanoplastics put stress on trees and impair photosynthesis](#)

The Global Plant Council highlights research showing that spruce and deciduous trees take up nano-sized microscopic plastic particles via their roots. These can reach the leaves and needles where they have an effect on photosynthesis.

[Imaging of pathogens on lettuce leaves in real-time](#)

This Science Daily article highlights research which has developed the first-ever method to monitor infections in plants in real-time, without the need to destroy them.

[Spruce tree planting ban over beetle pest fears](#)

Planting of new spruce trees is being banned in parts of East Anglia and South East England as part of new measures to limit the impact of *Ips typographus*, reports BBC News.

Plant breeding

[New legislation to support precision breeding and boost Britain's food security](#)

New precision breeding technology to increase food production, reduce costs to farmers and allow drought and disease resistant crops to be grown will be brought forward under new laws, reports this Government press release.

[Project seeks to advance resilient varieties of UK soft fruit crops](#)

The new Defra-funded Soft Fruit Genetic Improvement Network (GIN) aims to advance the breeding of more sustainable and resilient varieties of soft fruit crops in the UK, reports Farming UK.

[James Hutton Institute secures £2.4m in funding for trailblazing research projects](#)

The James Hutton Institute reports that it has secured funding for projects including medical cannabis standardisation, vertical farming light technology and genetic optimisation of lettuce.

Agriculture

[British beetroot growers to put down roots in US market](#)

The government has secured access to the US market for UK beetroot growers, reports this Government press release.

[Could pawpaw, the US-native fruit, become the new kiwi or mango?](#)

This Guardian article explores the potential of pawpaw, a tree fruit that can help farmers and the environment, and which could stay resilient in face of a climate crisis.

Food security

Harvest in England the second worst on record because of wet weather

The Guardian reports that England has suffered its second worst harvest on record – with fears growing for next year – after heavy rain last winter hit production of key crops including wheat and oats.

Biodiversity and conservation

Urgent UK nature rescue plan needed around COP16 talks to plug massive 30x30 target gap

The annual update from Wildlife and Countryside Link into progress in England on the target to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (the “30x30 target”) shows that the amount of land in England that can be said to be effectively protected for nature has fallen to just 2.93% while the amount of sea protected continues to lag at 9.92%.

UK will need to double nature protection funding to meet targets, new data shows

The Guardian highlights data which shows the UK government has been failing to meet its commitments to fund nature protection in the developing world, and will need to double current spending to meet the targets.

The dark matter of botany

This Kew Science article reports that Kew and partner institutions have put together a computer model to map the ‘botanical countries’ (often corresponding to political countries, or regions within them) that they predict are home to the highest numbers of undocumented species.

Forestry

Forestry Facts and Figures 2024 published today

Forest Research has released the latest Accredited Official Statistics on woodland and forestry in the UK.

Deforestation ‘roaring back’ despite 140-country vow to end destruction

The destruction of global forests increased in 2023, and is higher than when 140 countries promised three years ago to halt deforestation by the end of the decade, reports the Guardian.

High pollution levels linked to westward spread of European forest plants

UKCEH highlights research showing that many forest plant species are moving westwards across Europe, potentially in response to high nitrogen pollution levels.

Rapid Review of Evidence on Biodiversity in Great Britain’s Commercial Forests

The Forest Research Rapid Review of Evidence on Biodiversity in Great Britain’s Commercial Forests is a review of evidence on biodiversity in many of the most commonly encountered commercial high forest types in Great Britain.

Business and industry

Report reveals impact of industrial biotechnology investments

UKRI highlights a report showing that sustained public investment in industrial biotechnology between 2010 and 2021 has led to a wide range of economic and social benefits for the UK.

Sustainability

[UK climate finance helps reduce more than 105 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions globally](#)

The UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) 2024 results outline how it has helped 110 million people adapt to the effects of climate change, according to this Government press release.

[Antarctic 'greening' at dramatic rate](#)

Science Daily highlights research showing that vegetation cover across the Antarctic Peninsula has increased more than tenfold over the last four decades.

Other news

[RHS says autumn rain could bring out showstopper fungi](#)

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) says mushrooms will fare well this autumn if the current spell of wet weather continues. Recent rainfall and the resulting damp conditions could lead to this fascinating group of organisms growing bigger and looking fresher for longer.

Opportunities

[Plant Health Professional Register](#)

Those working in plant health are encouraged to apply for the RSB's [Plant Health Professionals 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.

[Accreditation Officer](#)

The RSB is currently looking for an Accreditation Officer to join a small dedicated team, managed by the Director responsible for Accreditation, Training and Professional Registers. The successful candidate will help to ensure that the objectives in the RSB five-year business plan are met, with an emphasis on facilitating accreditation applications, including attending site visits as a Society representative. In addition, there will be a requirement to assist with the administration of Professional Registers and our Training offerings. This role will require a reasonable amount of UK travel, some international travel, and nights away from home.

Deadline for applications: 29th October 2024

[Editorial Board Member for the Journal of Biological Education](#)

The Royal Society of Biology seeks a new Editorial Board member for the Journal of Biological Education, with particular expertise in biological education within early years and/or primary education; informal learning; or medical education. In this voluntary role, the successful applicant(s) will manage submission and review of at least two manuscripts each month and make recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief regarding publication.

More information can be found [here](#). Applications close at **23:59 on 15th November**.

Call for nominations IPBES spatial planning assessment

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), an intergovernmental body and the world's foremost authority on the science of biodiversity and ecosystem services, is calling on experts and fellows to take part in a new assessment focused on integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity. Further details can be found in the relevant notification (for [experts](#), and for [fellows](#)). Please note the **deadline for applications is 10th January 2025**.

Royal Society of Biology travel grants

AMRSB and early-career MRSB members of the Royal Society of Biology can now apply for a travel grant of up to £1,000 to support future travel in connection with biological study, teaching or research. Learn new lab and field techniques, gain professional development skills, and network with academics with the support of a travel grant. Visit the [website](#) for further information and to read reports from [previous grant recipients](#). The deadline for applications is **Friday 24th January 2025**.

T-level placement resource

T Level in Science is a new qualification that's helping to develop the workforce of the future. It's designed to help students gain hands-on skills and work experience – and part of that is a work placement. This resource is aimed at employers and explains how T Level Science students can help you secure the skilled, committed workforce your business needs. It also addresses concerns employers may have about taking on a placement, offers science-specific examples from existing placements, and explains how a placement could work in your organisation. [Download the resource today!](#)

Consultations

Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy

This public consultation will inform the development of the new industrial strategy: the government's proposed plan to ease the investor journey and create long-term, inclusive, secure and sustainable growth. The final industrial strategy will be published in spring 2025, alongside the multi-year Spending Review.

Closes: 11:59pm on 24 November 2024

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

[Green Careers Conference 2024](#)

6 November 2024

14:00 - 19:00

Burlington House – Linnean Society of London, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BF

Undergraduate students of the natural sciences and histories are invited to come together to celebrate the variety of careers available to them, interact and network with their peers and beyond, and learn new skills to enhance their career prospects. This in-person green careers event will be hosted by the British Ecological Society partnered with the Linnean Society.

[Plant Biology Education: Creating a Vision for the Future](#)

7 January 2025 – 8 January 2025

University of Lancaster

This collaborative meeting aims to build a strong, inclusive community of plant biology educators across the UK and beyond. This meeting has a primary focus on plant biology teaching in Higher Education, but will also be of interest to high school/college biology teachers and those delivering plant biology education and training in professional contexts. The meeting will focus on nurturing the next generation of plant biologists, recognising the critical role plant science plays in tackling global challenges. By fostering collaboration and sharing best practices, educators in higher education can develop a shared vision for the future of plant science education in the UK. This includes exploring ways to attract a diverse range of talent, prepare students for a variety of careers, and integrate cutting-edge technology into the higher education curriculum. Ultimately, this collaborative effort will work towards a future filled with well-equipped plant biologists ready to solve the pressing issues facing our planet.

And finally...

[‘Trees of hope’: Sycamore Gap tree saplings to be planted around UK](#)

The Guardian reports that the National Trust and Northumberland national park have announced an initiative inviting the public to request one of 49 saplings from the recently felled Sycamore Gap tree.



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Royal Society of Biology

Science Policy Team

1 Naoroji Street

London

WC1X 0GB

plantsci@rsb.org.uk

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