

The voice of the biosciences: RSB's science policy impact in 2024

At a glance

RSB's science policy work is guided by our [science policy priorities](#). Within this framework, through 2024, we synthesised our members' evidence and expertise and delivered it direct to policymakers and advisors across Parliament, Government, research funding bodies and wider sectors via **24** briefings, letters, [consultation responses](#), campaigns and reports. We hosted and collaboratively delivered **57**, and attended **43**, knowledge exchange meetings and [events](#) to engage these audiences with the bioscience community.

View our [science policy priorities](#) and find out more about the [impact of our policy work](#). Subscribe to receive our [science policy](#) and [plant science](#) newsletters direct to your inbox.

Headlines

- **Research landscape:** RSB's representation to the Spring Budget called on the Government to invest more in research and development (R&D) and to deploy incentives that are beneficial for the scientific workforce and the environment. Following announcement of the Budget, we welcomed the proposed investment in medical research and green technologies, but highlighted the need to recognise the breath of the life science sector and to support the other disciplines that are central to addressing global challenges. Ahead of the July General Election, RSB's science and education policy teams published a briefing for prospective Parliamentary Candidates, setting out bioscience priorities for the first year of a new Government. At the start of the new Parliament, RSB provided a summary for stakeholders of Government plans set out in the King's Speech. We sent RSB or joint welcome letters to new Science Minister Patrick Vallance; Secretary of State for environment, food and rural affairs Steve Reed MP; and Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for science, innovation and technology - focusing on issues such as scientific workforce needs. In preparation for the Autumn Budget announcement, RSB joined other leading organisations in signing a Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) letter to the Chancellor, urging the Government to back R&D to achieve ambitions for economic and social growth. RSB was also a signatory to a letter to The Times, co-ordinated by CaSE and the Science Media Centre, expressing concerns about potential cuts to the R&D budget.
- **Research culture:** RSB successfully piloted our new SEAT Scheme, with our first two Trainee Trustee volunteers spending a year shadowing RSB Council. Throughout scheme development we shared learnings with the sector, including a presentation on diversifying governance at an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Science and Health (EDIS) meeting. As part of our programme marking awareness days across the year, RSB published video profiles from our Fellows and a call to action for women to nominate themselves as Fellows across social media channels, to commemorate International Day of Women and Girls in Science, and International Women's Day. As an early-adopting annual host for the [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) policy internships scheme](#), RSB science and education policy teams hosted two interns.
- **Nature and climate:** RSB submitted a response to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into climate change and security. We recommended that the committee consider the broader spectrum of security issues affected by climate change, notably biological security and food security. Our response also emphasised that climate change is interconnected with other challenges such as biodiversity loss

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and chemical and waste pollution, and so these problems should be approached in tandem, with the integration of One Health principles. Through our partnership with the [Natural Capital Initiative](#), the RSB hosted a webinar discussion exploring how different areas of policy are informed and shaped by Natural Capital.

- **Ethical biological innovation:** RSB wrote to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) regarding its proposals for a new framework in England for the regulation of precision bred organisms used for food and animal feed. We responded to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Animal Welfare Committee's call for evidence to inform its review on Welfare Implications of Breeding and Breeding Technologies in Commercial Livestock Agriculture, highlighting new scientific evidence published since RSB's submission to the Defra consultation on the future of genetic technologies in 2021. RSB's work on the Precision Breeding Act and upcoming regulations for precision bred animals was presented at the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) Sustainable Agriculture and Food Strategic Advisory Panel. As a member and secretariat of the [UK Bioscience Sector Coalition \(UKBSC\)](#), RSB organised or attended 16 meetings to bring advice to the Home Office and other related bodies on the regulated use of animals in science.
- **Biological security:** RSB provided a briefing to a House of Lords debate regarding infectious disease threats to UK biosecurity, including human, animal and plant health. We delivered the [Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships scheme \(PHUGS\)](#) for another year, on behalf of a collective of funders including Defra. There were 12 projects, spread across the country, each offering an undergraduate student a funded opportunity to work on plant health research for 8-10 weeks. PHUGS students received opportunities to present their research via a symposium and further cross-sector events.

RSB continues to support and frequently attend many cross-sector networks and fora, where relevant to our policy priorities and to represent the bioscience community. We are grateful for this team-based approach to facilitating horizon scanning, exchange and collaboration with other organisations.