Cuts to research centres including the Institute for Fiscal Studies will lead to fewer independent economic analyses, which could have a major impact on public and political debate, senior economists have warned.

The budget for the institute’s flagship Centre for Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy (CPP) is to be £6.9 million for the next five years, down from £7.6m for 2010-15. Paul Johnson, the director of the IFS, confirmed to Research Fortnight that the centre will receive about 15 per cent less than it requested.

The decision was announced by the Economic and Social Research Council on 26 March. The Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics and Political Science will also have its funding cut, from £6.5m in 2010-15 to £5.5m for the next five years—a decrease of 15 per cent, and 30 per cent less than it requested. The CEP’s director John Van Reenen says he hopes to bridge the gap with money from research foundations.

Both centres are relied on by politicians, officials and journalists. But according to Johnson, the IFS’s research director Richard Blundell has told the ESRC that he may now have to cancel proposed work on top-income distribution, earnings and tax shelters, tax competition, and credit and insurance markets. “It will be difficult,” says Johnson. “We have nothing in the bank and our rent is rising quite steeply. We will end up inevitably having to do less than we would have done.”

A spokesman for the IFS, which is based in Central London, says that core funding for the CPP is “essentially the same” in cash terms because the 2010-15 grant included money for work on Scottish independence that has now been discontinued. But in real terms, the centre could be looking at a cut of 6 per cent.

The IFS website says that the microeconomics centre is fundamental to the institute’s success, allowing it to carry out long-term, independent research that underpins its broader economic analyses. Among other things, the centre’s work covers the tax system, consumer choices and public finances.

Although the IFS raises funds from other sources, Johnson says, “There’s a limit to the extent to which it can do that because it’s really only the ESRC money that gives it the time and space to turn things into academic articles.”

Just over half of the institute’s funding comes from the ESRC. Other sources include charities and the European Union, as well as government departments, which have provided a diminishing share of the institute’s funding over recent years: from 2009 to 2013, it fell by almost half.

Jonathan Portes, the director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, says the IFS centre is an important contributor to political debate: it recently debunked a Conservative claim that Labour’s spending plans for the next government would leave the average British household £3,000 worse off. “It was important that the IFS came out clearly and said it had no basis in fact and that no-one should take it seriously,” he told Research Fortnight.

The Academy of Social Sciences has described the drop in funding as “dismaying”, especially at election time when the IFS is “worth its weight in gold”. David Walker, the academy’s head of policy, says: “In our advocacy of the social sciences we cite the example of the IFS all the time. So does the ESRC itself.”

Walker says the ESRC should increase support for the IFS or at least keep its funding the same in real terms. Others go further. Economist Diane Coyle, a former Treasury insider and one-time economics editor of The Independent, suggests that it could be given permanent core funding. “The idea that there would be no research funding for the IFS at some stage is unthinkable,” she says.

A spokesman for the ESRC, which launched three centres—for higher education, sustainable prosperity and big data—when it announced the cuts, says that centres compete for funding in open competition and that the review panels applied competition rules to the CPP and CEP bids.
Coded message

PR teams must now practise what they preach

Something unusual happened last month. The often antagonistic worlds of science journalism and public relations united in a joint letter to Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude.

The letter draws our attention to a subtle change to the civil service code: civil servants are now required to obtain authorisation from ministers before communicating with the media.

The change is intended to cement a practice already widespread across the civil service. However, according to the Association of British Science Writers, the Science Media Centre and Stempra, the professional body for science PRs, making it a rule will stop publicly funded scientists from being able to respond quickly to the needs of journalists. This, they argue, will be detrimental to the cause of scientific literacy. They would like the government to think again, or to give scientists an exemption.

We welcome their intervention and, because of the standing of its signatories, the letter will be taken seriously. However, the broader image that it paints does not reflect reality. And it is important to understand why.

Research Fortnight and its sister publications would not exist were it not for myriad contacts between news teams and the machinery of the state. In previous times, it was possible for a writer or editor to pick up the phone and arrange a lunch meeting with a civil servant without notifying anyone besides the restaurant. But that changed about a decade ago.

We are not in some golden age of unfiltered communication between government and media. Quite the opposite. Nor do the bulk of government scientists actively court the media. Scientific advisers have their independence written into a separate code, but the daily practice for a scientist in government is to be cautious, working with the grain of government and in close cooperation with communications teams.

There are, nonetheless, every day, hundreds of encounters between journalists and civil servants. And with the amended code, it is clear that individual ministers are not likely to take on the task of approving these encounters. Approval will instead fall to government communications offices. Even if the Cabinet Office exempts scientists from seeking authorisation, the practice of dealing with media queries via communications offices will not diminish: rather, it is likely to increase.

That is the greater issue. And that is why a letter signed jointly by writers and PRs is important.

Some communications officers will relish this recognition of their growing authority. But others will recoil at the extra work and the implied assumption that press officers exist primarily to control the message.

For most government strategy teams, communication is about keeping to an agreed line, enforcing a message and controlling access to decision-makers. It is not about helping readers to appreciate complexity, or recognising the importance of being fair to all sides in a debate.

Stempra members in government know they will be called on to implement the new arrangements. By signing the letter, they are saying that good writing and good PR should stand for the same thing: enabling publicly funded researchers to speak as freely as they can.

elsewhere

“My parents came here from Poland after the war. My father was a bricklayer, and I’m now vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge.”

Leszek Borysiewicz says the next UK government must make sure the country is welcoming to immigrants. BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, 10/4/15.

“It should be hard to get a postdoc—harder than getting into graduate school.”

Gregory Petsko, a neuroscientist at Weill Cornell Medical College and the chairman of a 2014 postdoctoral committee convened by the National Academies, says that fewer postdoc places, limits to terms and more staff scientists could help reduce the pressure on postdocs. Nature, 7/4/15.

“The use of a university-owned private company as a staffing agency constitutes a process of ‘internal outsourcing’, using a shared services model to serve the dual purpose of centralising the hiring of casual staff while being able to terminate employees’ ‘assignments’ at any time.”

The journalist and doctoral researcher Craig McFegar opposes Teach Higher, the University of Warwick’s planned staffing initiative, OpenDemocracy, 9/4/15.

“I think we’re going to have strong indications of life beyond Earth within a decade, and I think we’re going to have definitive evidence within 20 to 30 years.”

NASA’s chief scientist Ellen Stofan makes a bold statement during a panel discussion about the possibility of finding alien life. Space.com, 7/4/15.

“When President Obama was first elected in 2008, he promised to restore science to ‘its rightful place’. In the Iran negotiations, he appears to have done so.”

Roger Pielke, a professor in environmental studies at the University of Colorado, says he is happy with the involvement of the United States’ energy secretary Ernest Monitz, a physicist, in the nuclear deal between the US and Iran. The Guardian’s Political Science blog, 8/4/15.

“Essentially we have £11.5 million to play with.”

A spokesperson for the Arts and Humanities Research Council says that money safeguarded in the past for increasing PhD stipends could potentially be used to increase the volume of its grants—despite a real-terms cut in its budget allocation.

Research Fortnight, 13 April 2005
Nottingham vice-chancellor to lead Russell Group

David Greenaway, the vice-chancellor of the University of Nottingham, is to be the next chairman of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. Greenaway will replace David Eastwood, the vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham, in September. Greenaway, a professor of economics and founding director of the Leverhulme Centre for Research on Globalisation and Economic Policy, has been an adviser to several governments.

Opposition won’t stop Scottish governance bill, claims review chairman

The chairman of the 2012 review of the governance of Scottish universities has said that Scotland’s first minister is unlikely to let opposition from universities halt proposed legislation in the area. Ferdinand von Prondzynski, the vice-chancellor of Robert Gordon University, said that Nicola Sturgeon and the education secretary Angela Constance had assured him that they were committed to the proposal. The bill would implement his recommendations that chairs of university governing bodies be elected and that the role of university principals be clarified.

Elsevier questions interim findings of HEFCE metrics review

Metrics as a measure of performance may soon be ready for use in a Research Excellence Framework, according to the managing director of research management at the publisher Elsevier. Nick Fowler told a conference that some metrics were already a reasonable predictor of performance. This was in contrast to the interim findings of the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s review of metrics, which said that metrics were not ready to replace peer review.

Universities advised to cough up for open access

The only way to ensure compliance with funders’ policies on open access is to “throw money at the problem”, University College London’s chief librarian Paul Ayris has said. Universities are expected to spend a combined £4 million to £5m on complying with the open-access policy of the Higher Education Funding Council for England in the next Research Excellence Framework.

Academics wade into fossil fuel divestment row

The international association Academics Stand Against Poverty has said that it “strongly supports” the divestment of university funds from fossil fuel companies, and urges all universities to adopt this stance. The group says that investments effectively endorse the exploitation of fossil fuels.

Expert on Japanese society looks to raise profile of social sciences

Roger Goodman, who has been named the next chairman of the Academy of Social Sciences, has said there is much work to be done to raise the profile of the social sciences, especially in policy-making. Goodman is the head of social sciences and a professor of modern Japanese studies at the University of Oxford. He replaces Cary Cooper, a professor of organisational psychology, in June.

Government’s media muzzle causes concern

The heads of three science communication organisations have written to the Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude, asking him to rethink changes to the civil service code that mean civil servants must obtain ministerial authorisation before talking to the media. The Science Media Centre, the Stempra network for public-relations professionals and the Association of British Science Writers said that the changes were a cause of “deep concern”.

what’s going on
Rolls-Royce tries to calm UK nerves after India R&D move

The defence and aerospace company Rolls-Royce has said that its decision to cut its UK engineering workforce by 800 will not ruin its relationship with UK universities.

“The UK has been and remains our biggest concentration of university engagement,” a Rolls-Royce spokeswoman told Research Fortnight in a statement, adding that the company featured in more Research Excellence Framework case studies than any other.

The statement was issued in response to warnings from the Unite union on 10 April that the company was risking its relationship with universities. In 2014, Rolls-Royce revealed plans for a 500-strong R&D facility in Bangalore and announced that it would seek 800 voluntary redundancies among UK-based engineers.

Rolls-Royce works with 14 universities in the UK at University Technology Centres, and has four Advanced Manufacturing Research Centres. Tony Tinley, a political organiser at Unite’s office in Derby, where Rolls-Royce is based, says these links are bound to be affected: “They’re losing expertise but not replacing it at the other end.”

Rolls-Royce says there will be no further redundancies beyond those announced, but it will not be looking to hire any staff. Tinley says this won’t help regional employment. “If you knock on the door of your local university’s engineering faculty and ask how many of their graduates have found jobs, they’ll say 50 per cent.”

The Rolls-Royce statement says the R&D hub in India will benefit the company. “Rolls-Royce’s presence in India is important to our market positioning for new business, access to talent and competitiveness,” it says.

On 26 March, business secretary Vince Cable was grilled by MPs about what appears to be the offshoring of highly skilled roles to India. Chris Williamson, the Labour MP for Derby North, asked Cable what he was doing to deter companies from investing in lower-wage economies rather than the UK. Cable replied that there was “also a great deal of onshoring by Rolls-Royce”, but Tinley says that the work being brought back to the UK is “low-paid, zero-hour contract” work in call centres.

“Every time the government enters into an R&D deal it should say ‘What do we get in return?’ But this government is poor at negotiating,” he adds.

No science ring fence in Labour manifesto

The Labour Party has refused to protect the research budget from cuts but has reiterated plans to provide a long-term funding policy framework for science.

In its manifesto Britain Can Be Better, published on 13 April, Labour says that “scientific discovery and technological innovation will drive economic advancement this century”. However, the manifesto contains few other details on the party’s plans for science and innovation.

The 85-page document contains just three mentions of the word ‘science’ and two of the word ‘research’, saying that “an outstanding science research base” and “world-leading universities” are two of the strengths that Labour would build on. This is down from six and seven mentions, respectively, in the 2010 manifesto, in which the party committed to a ring-fenced science budget.

Speaking to Research Fortnight before the manifesto launch, the shadow business secretary, Labour’s Chuka Umunna, said the party was unwilling to make unfunded spending promises. Instead, he warned that there could be hefty cuts to science under a future Conservative government and claimed that Labour would provide a more “responsible fiscal framework”.

“If the Conservatives were re-elected, the Office for Budget Responsibility has been very clear that the scale of the cuts we are looking at in the first three years would be twice as big as those in any year in this parliament. And given that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is an unprotected department, you are looking at a 40 per cent cut,” he said. “The research and science community would need to pause and reflect on that when making a decision as to who they wish to throw their support behind in this election.”

The manifesto says that the party would help universities to strengthen regional economies through the formation of links with industry and “embark on the biggest devolution of power to our English city and county regions in a hundred years”.

It also commits to building on the UK’s strength in digital technology, and says that there will be opportunities as the application of “new transformative technologies in the fields of robotics, genetics, 3D printing and big data” widens.

It reiterates plans to create technical degrees, support part-time study and reduce tuition fees to £6,000 a year, saying that this would be funded by tax measures affecting the highest earners and by tackling tax avoidance.
Quality boost in REF agriculture unit down to targeted hiring and impact focus, say universities

Targeted hiring, restructuring and a focus on impact played their part in the significant improvement in research submitted to the agriculture, veterinary and food science unit of assessment in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, research leaders have said.

In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, only 10 per cent of the research submitted to the unit was considered 4* or “world-leading”—the fourth-lowest percentage of any unit. But in REF 2014, the figure rose to 35 per cent.

The University of Glasgow was one of the institutes that dramatically improved its performance, increasing its 4* research from 5 per cent in 2008 to 46 per cent in 2014. Daniel Haydon, the director of Glasgow’s Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine, says that hiring researchers played a big part in this—he estimates that at least 25 per cent of the staff submitted in 2014 were recruited after 2008. The university also restructured its faculties of medicine, veterinary medicine and life sciences, and considered how to maximise the impact of its applied research.

The University of Aberdeen was one of the best performers in the unit in 2008, but still increased its percentage of 4* research from 20 per cent to 56 per cent in 2014. David Johnson, the director of the Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Aberdeen, says a focus on impact and targeted hiring were also behind his university’s improvement, along with the number of collaborations its researchers formed with partners in the UK and beyond.

Johnson says that an increased focus on agriculture and related issues from the research councils has also been a factor. This view is backed up by Glenn Gibson and Bob Rastall, the heads of food microbial sciences and the department of food and nutritional sciences, respectively, at the University of Reading. They say that council initiatives such as the Diet and Health Research Industry Club, which supports the food industry by funding academic research, have helped departments to access funds that were previously hard to come by.

Reading also increased the interdisciplinarity of its entry. Having received 4* research scores for 5 per cent of its agriculture and 15 per cent of its food biosciences research in separate entries to the unit in 2008, the university achieved 4* scores for 45 per cent of its research in a single submission based around food security in 2014.

Call for more recognition for peer reviewers

Publishers, as well as researchers, want peer reviewers of academic papers to receive more recognition for the quality and opportunity cost of their work, a report from the Research Information Network has said. Representatives of 11 publishers and peer-review platforms said they wanted to do more to assign credit to peer reviewers, and that it was difficult to find enough qualified researchers who were willing and able to devote time to reviewing.

Scottish universities commit to gender balance

Higher education institutions in Scotland have agreed to ensure a minimum of 40 per cent representation of both men and women on their governing bodies. The limits apply to the independent members of boards: the remaining 20 per cent, who may be of either gender, are elected by an institution’s staff and students. However, the proportion of these elected members on a board tends to be closer to one-third of the total.

Vice-chancellors lobby Brussels over Juncker plan

More than 50 vice-chancellors and other senior university figures have travelled to Brussels to call for the withdrawal of Jean-Claude Juncker’s proposal to reallocate funding from Horizon 2020 to a European Fund for Strategic Investments. According to a press release from the vice-chancellors’ group Universities UK, the delegation will meet policymakers on 13 April to lobby them about the proposal.

OU seeks pro vice-chancellor for research

The Open University is advertising for a pro vice-chancellor of research, scholarship and quality to help it prepare for the next Research Excellence Framework. The role pays approximately £120,000 a year and is open for applications until 8 May. The job description hints at “an ambitious new research plan” called Research Shaping the Future, which includes ways to build the university’s position for the next REF.
Humble no more

Parliamentary committees have shamed corporate giants and humbled Rupert Murdoch. With parliament having dissolved ahead of the election, Adam Smith reviews the performance of the Commons Science and Technology Committee.

When the UK government set about dismantling the Forensic Science Service in 2010, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee stood up for what it feared would be lost. First, it published reports expressing concern for the research underpinning forensic techniques and technologies. And in 2013, when the then minister for crime prevention and drug policy, Liberal Democrat MP Jeremy Browne, argued before the committee that the government did not need a plan for forensics while such services were farmed out to companies, it expressed concern for justice.

In its 2013 report on forensics, the committee said Browne had been evasive and shown disregard for the committee, as if he had not understood that its job was to hold the government to account. Three months later, Browne was removed from his post.

Browne’s experience before the committee, which was chaired over the five years of the parliament by Labour MP Andrew Miller, was not unique. In another committee, Labour MP Margaret Hodge embarrassed multinationals including Google over their tax affairs. Rupert Murdoch said he had the most humble day of his life in front of another. And the science committee had colourful exchanges with science ministers as well as with the government’s chief scientist Mark Walport, whose forthright and forceful style in front of the committee was “entertaining”, say members.

Select committees do have clout, says David Heath, a Liberal Democrat MP who rejoined the committee in 2013 after an initial stint from 2003 to 2010 and a spell at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. “I know from inside government,” he says, “that when you know a committee is looking at something, it brings forward decisions that you know you have to take.”

However, Miller wants the power of the committees to grow further, partly by having parliament set a fixed slot in the schedule for committee meetings. Committees have to find their own regular slots, and with up to 13 busy members this can be tricky. Reducing that number to 11 would be another forward step, says Miller, making elections to the committees more competitive and helping to boost members’ status. “My endgame would be to give the select committees the power to initiate a bill,” he says. “There’s no constitutional reason why that shouldn’t be the case.”

Things have already begun to change, with a quiet revolution in the way committees are appointed. In 2010, elections were held for the first time for both chairs and members. And characters such as Hodge have shown that committees are no longer an obscure hobby in parliament; they are a career option for the individual and a strong pillar to democracy.

The science committee has not grabbed many headlines, but Conservative member and astrologist fan David Tredinnick has helped to attract some attention. The committee also stepped in when much-loved institutions such as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the British Antarctic Survey were under threat, partly by bringing the issues to the attention of the media.

Committee members are supported by clerks and in-house specialists, but they could not do their work without the expertise offered by academics. A great many of the 1,916 written submissions to Miller’s committee and the 668 witnesses it heard from were academics. Committee clerks say they have trouble convincing researchers to submit evidence to inquiries, but the situation is improving as the profiles of the committees grow.

Indeed, there is growing evidence that select committees are a way of making an academic impact. An evaluation of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework found that the most frequent forms of impact cited were parliamentary scrutiny and informing government policy. A total of 265 case studies specifically mentioned select committees, and in 32 instances select committee reports cited the research noted in the case study.

This trend could make it easier for the next committee to do its job. Outgoing members expect their successors to address ethical concerns in nanotechnology and to revisit the changes to science practicals in A levels, as well as forensics. But the interests of the next committee will depend on its members—and that depends on the outcome of the election. Conservative MP and committee member Stephen Metcalfe is hoping to win a second term on the committee if he is re-elected to parliament. “If the chair is available I will consider standing,” he says, adding that his tactic for taking on the likes of Walport would be to adopt a similar style of debate. “Perhaps we need to be a bit more challenging,” he says.

More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com
AHRC leadership fellows
The Arts and Humanities Research Council invites applications for its leadership fellows scheme. Proposals should have a full economic cost of between £50,000 and £250,000 [1].

CRUK pancreatic cancer
Cancer Research UK invites applications for its call on pancreatic cancer dream team. The budget is worth up to US$12 million (£8.1m) [14].

RCUK social research
The Research Councils UK Shared Services invite tenders for the provision of social research services. The budget is worth between £40 million and £90m [15].

ScotGov wave energy
The Scottish Government's Highlands and Islands Enterprise invites registrations for its R&D services call on power take-off systems for wave energy. The budget is worth up to £7 million [20].

EPSRC quantum tech
The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council invites proposals for: quantum technologies strategic capital investment, worth up to £25 million; training and skills hubs in quantum systems engineering, worth up to £15m [30].
UK highlights

New opportunities from UK-based funders.

AHRC leadership fellows 1
The Arts and Humanities Research Council invites applications for its leadership fellows scheme. This enables early-career researchers to develop their leadership experience and capabilities as they establish themselves and develop beyond doctoral and postdoctoral work, and to produce innovative research that moves significantly beyond doctoral projects. Proposals should have a full economic cost of between £50,000 and £250,000. 

Deadline: 29 April 2015
Contact: sarah.mussell@decc.gsi.gov.uk
Web id: 1184475
Email: grantspreaward@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk

No deadline [1]

Radiation meetings
The LH Gray Memorial Trust invites applications for its conference and workshop grants. These promote research and knowledge exchange concerning radiation and related sciences. Grants are worth up to £2,000 each for conferences lasting from three to five days or workshops lasting from one to three days.

Deadline: 11 August 2015
Contact: Contact: Kaye Williams
Email: kaye.williams@manchester.ac.uk
Web id: 1184275
Email: Web id: 1184270

No deadline [2]

STFC beamtime access
The Science and Technology Facilities Council invites proposals requiring access to ISIS and Diamond. Investigators may submit proposals requiring beamtime at both the ISIS pulsed neutron and muon source and the Diamond synchrotron light source, based at the Harwell campus in Oxfordshire, UK.

Deadline: 29 April 2015
Contact: trevor.rayment@stfc.ac.uk
Web id: 11844271
Email: Web id: 11844268

No deadline [3]

Smart meter data
The Department of Energy and Climate Change invites tenders for smart metering non-domestic early learning research. Tenders will help participate in the strategic research to improve the evidence base on how and why smart meter data is or is not being used for energy management in relation to non-domestic organisations, and the pathways, enablers and barriers to energy saving using such data. The first stage of the contract is worth between £90,000 and £100,000, with stage two worth between £210,000 and £230,000.

Deadline: 8 May 2015
Contact: Helen Dewberry
Email: helen.dewberry@decc.gsi.gov.uk
Web id: 11843439
Deadline: 29 April 2015 [6]

UK/Italy workshop
The British Council invites applications to attend its researchers links workshop in Italy on 29 April 2015. Grants are available for early-career researchers based in the UK and Italy to attend a workshop on rain, rivers and reservoirs, due to take place from 1 to 3 September 2015 in São Paulo, Brazil. Grants cover travel, accommodation and subsistence.

Deadline: 18 May 2015
Contact: Patrick Corbett
Email: patrick.corbett@pet.hw.ac.uk
Web id: 1184476
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [6]

UK-Chile grants
The Chilean National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research, under the Fondecy Idea scheme, together with the British Council, under the Newton-Picarte Fund, invites proposals based in the UK-Chile two stage technology transfer projects grants. These aim to support the development of science and technology research projects that have the potential to deliver tangible economic and social impacts in the short term. Grants are worth up to £100,000 (US$141,500).

Deadline: 15 May 2015
Contact: Matt Sheldon
Email: matt.sheldon@conicyt.cl
Web id: 1184271
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [7]

FSA antimicrobial resistance
The Food Standards Agency invites tenders for the provision of a systematic literature review to assess the significance of the food chain in the context of antimicrobial resistance. The tenderer will undertake a literature review to assess the contribution of different foods of both animal and non-animal origin and handlers in the processing and catering settings, and also the relative importance of antimicrobial resistant microorganisms in foods imported into the UK as opposed to food produced domestically.

Deadline: 8 May 2015
Contact: Tracey Hunt
Email: tracey.hunt@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [8]

Structural biology meetings
Instruct invites proposals for its call on training courses. This supports the organisation of structural biology courses and workshops, to be held at Instruct centres. Instruct will contribute to general course expenses and the participation of young researchers.

Deadline: 30 April 2015
Contact: Emma Franziska
Email: emma.franziska@instruct3d.eu
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [9]

Alzheimer’s networks
Alzheimer’s Research UK invites applications for its network support. This scheme acts as a bridge for Alzheimer’s research networks that have already secured other funding or have a clear plan to secure funding, or where there is a clearly-argued need to retain key staff to complete key pieces of work to a tangible end point. Grants are worth up to £30,000 per network.

Deadline: 30 April 2015
Contact: Colette Hutt
Email: colette.hutt@alzheimersresearchuk.org
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [10]

RCUK social research
The Research Councils UK Shared Service invites tenders for the provision of social research services. Tenderers will provide research and evaluation services in the following lots: commercial, economic and social impact assessment and analysis, financial, regulatory and econometric forecasting analysis; programme and pilot evaluation; comparative evaluation; thematic analysis; and experimental and quasi-experimental research specialist research and advice in the remuneration area; pensions. The budget is worth up to £900,000 over four years.

Deadline: 15 May 2015
Contact: Helen Dewberry
Email: helen.dewberry@decc.gsi.gov.uk
Web id: 1184477

Chronic myeloid leukemia
Newcastle University invites tenders to provide polymerase chain reaction testing services and biobank services for a UK multicentre clinical trial in chronic myeloid leukaemia – SPIRIT 3. The tenderer will provide molecular analysis and biobanking for the SPIRIT 3 trial, which consists of two lots, namely quantitative PCR testing for BCR-ABL and the provision of biobanking services. The framework is estimated to be worth £4.2 million over the three years.

Deadline: 18 May 2015
Contact: Emma Banksby
Email: purchasing@ncrc.ac.uk

Defra biodiversity monitoring
The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs invites tenders for its contract on making earth observation data on biodiversity monitoring and surveillance. The tenderer will test and evaluate the application of earth observation in order to monitor the condition of habitats in England using grassland and peatland within selected pilot areas.

Deadline: 22 May 2015
Contact: procurement@defra.gov.uk
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [12]

HEFCE learning gain
The Higher Education Funding Council for England invites expressions of interest for its call on piloting and evaluating measures of learning gain. Funding supports those institutions who will pilot and evaluate the following measures of learning gain in higher education in England: standardised tests, grades, self-reporting surveys, reflective methods and other qualitative methods. The budget is worth at least £1 million over the next three years.

Deadline: 22 May 2015
Contact: Ross Hudson
Email: r.hudson@hefce.ac.uk
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [13]

Pancreatic cancer teams
Cancer Research UK, through Stand Up To Cancer, in collaboration with the Lustgarten Foundation, invites applications for its call on pancreatic cancer dream team. This supports one multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, transatlantic dream team. In addition, the tenderer will undertake a literature review to assess the signifi-

Deadline: 22 May 2015
Contact: Matt Sheldon
Email: su2c@cancer.org.uk
Deadline: 6 May 2015 [14]

RCUK social research
The Research Councils UK Shared Service invites tenders for the provision of social research services. Tenderers will provide research and evaluation services in the following lots: commercial, economic and social impact assessment and analysis, financial, regulatory and econometric forecasting analysis; programme and pilot evaluation; comparative evaluation; thematic analysis; and experimental and quasi-experimental research specialist research and advice in the remuneration area; pensions. The budget is worth up to £900,000 over four years.

Deadline: 15 May 2015
Contact: Helen Dewberry
Email: helen.dewberry@decc.gsi.gov.uk
Web id: 1184477

Crucial small molecule cancer
Cancer Research UK invites applications for its small-molecule drug discovery project awards. These support high quality oncology drug discovery research within the UK. Awards support the rapid identification and validation of novel, highly discriminative therapeutic targets, as well as the dis-
Neuropsychiatry research

The Royal College of Psychiatrists, with a contribution from the Gosling Estate, invites applications for the Gosling fellowship. This enables psychiatry trainees to complete a research project in neuropsychiatry as part of their training programme. Prizes are worth £5,000 each.

Web id: 1184438
Email: kkottasz@rcpsych.ac.uk
Deadline: 31 May 2015 [26]

UK-Chile grants

The Chilean National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research, under the Newton-Picarte Fund, invites proposals for its UK-Chile joint regional programme. This aims to fund partnerships to apply existing scientific and technological solutions that have been developed in Chile or internationally, to challenges and opportunities specific to particular regions in Chile. Grants are worth up to £130 million (£143,300) each.

Web id: 1184281
Email: matt.sheldon@conicyt.cl
Deadline: 1 June 2015 [27]

Exchanges with Hong Kong

The Royal Society invites applications for the Kan Tong Po visiting fellowships. These enable UK or US-based scientists to collaborate with Hong Kong-based academics, or for Hong Kong-based scientists to collaborate with academics in the UK or US. Fellowships provide up to £3,000 for visits lasting up to three months.

Web id: 1180162
Email: international.exchanges@royalsociety.org
Deadline: 1 June 2015 [28]

ESRC-China collaboration

The Economic and Social Research Council and the National Natural Science Foundation of China invite proposals for their collaborative research on urban transformations, and the economic development and welfare of China. Grants are worth between £500,000 and £750,000 at 80 per cent full economic cost for UK applicants. Approximately four to six proposals may be funded for projects lasting up to three years.

Web id: 1184372
Contact: Tim Pank
Email: urban@esrc.ac.uk
Deadline: 28 May 2015 [26]

Basil downy mildew research

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board’s Horticultural Development Company, in collaboration with the British Herb Trade Association, invites tenders to improve knowledge and control of basil downy mildew in protected and outdoor crops. The tenderer will generate research data on the epidemiology and control of basil downy mildew in order to produce and communicate best practice guidelines to growers for controlling the pathogen in horticultural crops. The total project budget is worth approximately £30,000 per year over two years.

Web id: 1184455
Email: techadmin@hdc.ahdb.org.uk

Dementia clinical trials

Alzheimer’s Research UK invites expressions of interest for its global clinical trials fund. This supports clinical trials in the UK or worldwide that have the potential to be of benefit to dementia patients. Grants are worth up to £500,000 per project.

Web id: 1184311
Email: research@alzheimersresearch.org.uk
Deadline: 3 July 2015 [39]

RAEng innovation prize

The Royal Academy of Engineering invites applications for its launchpad competition. This encourages young entrepreneurs to start a new business based on their innovation or invention in engineering or technology, with engineering defined in its broadest sense. The winner receives £15,000 and a year’s membership of the enterprise hub, which provides mentoring, training and networking opportunities with UK entrepreneurs and investors.

Web id: 1183587
Email: catherine.lawrence@raeng.org.uk
Deadline: 6 July 2015 [40]

RCUK South Africa PhDs

Research Councils UK and the South African National Research Foundation invite applications for their international PhD partnering scheme. This aims to support partnering activities between UK and South African research organisations at PhD level. RCUK will contribute £1.8 million overall and the NRF will contribute up to ZAR900,000 (£51,400) per award.

Web id: 1184312
Email: international@rcuk.ac.uk
Deadline: 9 July 2015 [41]

Innovate UK awards

Innovate UK invites applications for its long-term care research challenge competition. This aims to stimulate the development of products, services and systems that disrupt the institutional long-care model and that will make a significant change to the existing market, being sustainable, scalable and fit for the 21st century. The total budget is £4 million.

Web id: 1184340
Email: support@innovateuk.gov.uk
Deadline: 26 August 2015 [42]

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iSSn 1358-1198
Published every two weeks with

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council invites applications for its international PhD scholarship scheme. This aims to support early-career researchers to complete PhD level research and that will make a significant contribution to the development of products, services and systems that disrupt the institutional long-care model and that will make a significant change to the existing market, being sustainable, scalable and fit for the 21st century. The total budget is £4 million.

Web id: 1184340
Email: support@innovateuk.gov.uk
Deadline: 26 August 2015 [42]

Research Fortnight, 15 April 2015
funding opportunities 9

The Royal Academy of Engineering invites applications for its launchpad competition. This encourages young entrepreneurs to start a new business based on their innovation or invention in engineering or technology, with engineering defined in its broadest sense. The winner receives £15,000 and a year’s membership of the enterprise hub, which provides mentoring, training and networking opportunities with UK entrepreneurs and investors.

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Web id: 1184340
Email: support@innovateuk.gov.uk
Deadline: 26 August 2015 [42]
Surgery fellowships

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow invites applications for the following fellowships:

• travelling fellowships, worth up to £2,000 each. Web id: 1859398
• the David Murdoch memorial travelling fellowship, worth up to £2,000. Web id: 1184401

Email: scholarships@rcpsg.ac.uk
Deadline: 28 August 2015 [44]

Innovate UK aerospace tech

Innovate UK invites registrations for its game-changing technologies for aerospace competition. This supports collaborative R&D projects that accelerate the commercialisation of highly innovative technologies for civil aerospace. Projects are expected to range in size between £250,000 and £1.5 million.

Web id: 1184436
Email: support@innovateuk.gov.uk
Deadline: 9 September 2015 [45]

NIHR services and delivery

The Department of Health’s National Institute for Health Research invites proposals under the commissioned funding stream of its health services and delivery research programme. Proposals are sought on evaluating service models of smoking cessation in prison.

Web id: 1184349
Email: hsdrinfo@southampton.ac.uk
Deadline: 10 September 2015 [46]

Renewed opportunities from funders based in the UK.

AHRC leadership fellows

The Arts and Humanities Research Council invites applicants for the standard route of its leadership fellows scheme. This enables researchers to develop their capabilities as leaders, to carry out work with a potential to generate a transformative impact on their discipline, and to develop and undertake leadership activities that are connected to their research. Proposals should have a full economic cost of between £50,000 and £250,000. Fellowships cover up to 80 per cent of FEC and are awarded for six to 18 months.

Web id: 1161652
Email: grantspreaward@ahrc.ac.uk
No deadline [47]

Food production research

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation invites applications for funding under its food strand. Grants support initiatives that aim to promote and demonstrate reduced usage of harmful pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics and fossil fuels in food production. There is no set minimum or maximum funding amount, however grants are rarely worth more than £500,000.

Web id: 258606
Email: info@esmeefairbairn.org.uk
No deadline [49]

MRC environmental exposure

The Medical Research Council invites proposals for its environmental exposure and chronic disease highlight notice. This supports research that enhances the knowledge base relating to the environmental impact on chronic disease, and that capitalises on advanced research approaches in environmental epidemiology, molecular genetics and novel measurement technologies.

Web id: 1171203
Email: tim.cullinford@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk
No deadline [54]

Art conservation and women

The Pilgrim Trust invites applications for its project grants. These support projects in the areas of art preservation and scholarship, and social welfare. Grants are usually worth £30,000 each.

Web id: 194097
Email: info@thepilgrimtrust.org.uk
No deadline [55]

ScoGov tech development

The Scottish Government’s Scottish Enterprise invites applications for grants, under its Smart: Scotland initiative. These support technical feasibility studies and plans for research and development projects with a commercial endpoint. Grants are worth up to £600,000 each.

Web id: 194490
Email: enquiries@scoent.co.uk
No deadline [56]

Scottish healthcare

Tennent’s Scottish Enterprise invites applications for its small research grants. These aim to foster high-quality research within the healthcare professions in Scotland in the fields of medicine, dentistry, the medical sciences and allied professions. Grants are worth up to £12,000 each.

Web id: 188890
Email: gen.sec@talk21.com
No deadline [57]

Egyptology awards

The Egypt Exploration Society invites applications for its centenary awards. These assist early-career Egyptologists with conducting fieldwork and museum- or archive-based research. The total budget is £6,000.

Web id: 1160965
Email: application@ees.ac.uk
Deadline: 1 May 2015 [62]

Theology grants

The Saint Luke’s College Foundation invites applications for its personal and corporate awards. These either support individuals who are undertaking post-graduate studies and research in theology and religious education, or enable departments of theology and religious education to enhance their capacity to provide education in these fields. The total budget is typically around £40,000.

Web id: 1157880
Email: director@st-lukes-foundation.org.uk
Deadline: 1 May 2015 [63]

Scottish literary award

The Saltire Society, in partnership with the National Library of Scotland, invites entries for the Scottish research book of the year award. This recognises books that best represents a significant body of research and offers new insight or dimension on their subject. The award is worth £2,000. Award winners will be shortlisted for the society’s Scottish book of the year award, worth £6,000.

Web id: 1170859
Email: saltire@saltiresociety.org.uk
Deadline: 1 May 2015 [64]

NIHR health technology

The Department of Health’s National Institute for Health Research invites expressions of interest for researcher-led workstream under its health technology assessment programme. This funds clinical and applied health research on end of life care and any aspect of mesothelioma to assess the effectiveness of technologies within the NHS.

Web id: 255825
Email: htacet@soton.ac.uk
Deadline: 6 May 2015 [65]

Chest, heart and stroke

Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke invites applications for its scientific research grants. These support research on the care and prevention of chest, heart and stroke illnesses. Grants cover direct costs, including salaries, consumables, travel and other expenses.

Web id: 184400
Contact: Frances Campbell
Email: fcampbell@nichs.org.uk
Deadline: 8 May 2015 [66]

ESRC/DFID education systems

The Economic and Social Research Council and the Department for International Development invite proposals for their education and development research programme on raising learning outcomes in education systems. This aims to address key questions on learning outcomes within education systems in developing countries, provide policymakers and practitioners with concrete ideas on how to improve learning outcomes, and understand how these translate to their specific contexts.

Web id: 1191823
Email: fellowships@nc3rs.org.uk
Deadline: 15 May 2015 [68]

Animals in research fellowships

The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) invites applications for its research scholarships. These either support people with arthritis. Grants are worth up to £300,000 per project over a period of three years.

Web id: 1182473
Email: publications@nc3rs.org.uk
Deadline: 15 May 2015 [68]

CRUK immunology awards

Cancer Research UK invites applications for its immunology research project awards. These aim to catalyse research and build the UK’s research base in cancer immunoology by funding immunologists in non-cancer fields. Awards are worth up to £300,000 per project over a period of three years.

Web id: 1181313
Email: gemma.balmer@cancer.org.uk
Deadline: 18 May 2015 [69]

Equine research awards

The Horse racing Betting Levy Board invites applications for the following grants:

• small project grants. Total project costs should generally not exceed £10,000 over one year. In exceptional circumstances, grants worth up to £50,000 may be awarded. Web id: 1179238
• clinical scholarships.

Web id: 1179250
Email: equine.grants@hbhb.org.uk
Deadline: 25 May 2015 [72]

Natural science grants

The Royal Society invites applications for its research grants. These provide seed-corn funding for early-career UK scientists for research within the society’s remit in the natural sciences, including the history of science. Grants are worth up to £15,000 each.

Web id: 212301
Email: researchgrants@royalsociety.org.uk
Deadline: 26 May 2015 [73]

NIHR medical technology

The Department of Health’s National Institute for Health Research invites applications for the following awards:

• invention for innovation (i4i) product development awards. Awards cover between 80 and 100 per cent of eligible project costs.

Web id: 1166582
Email: i4i programme@nihr-ccf.org.uk
Deadline: 27 May 2015 [75]

MRC public health

The Medical Research Council invites proposals for its public health intervention development scheme. This supports the early development of novel public health interventions. Studies should address a UK or global public health issue and offer an innovative approach to intervention development or applying an existing intervention in a new setting. Awards are worth up to £50,000 each.

Web id: 1179981
Contact: Kate Aylett
Email: publichealth@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk
Deadline: 28 May 2015 [76]

CRUK drug discovery awards

Cancer Research UK invites applications for its biotherapeutic drug discovery project awards. These support projects at all stages of drug discovery from target identification and validation to early preclinical development. Awards cover salaries and running expenses.

Web id: 1182473
Email: paul.wilcock@cancer.org.uk
Deadline: 1 June 2015 [78]

Arthritis grants

Arthritis Research UK invites applications for the following grants:

• project grants addressing a highlight notice on improving the quality of life for people with arthritis. Grants are worth up to £300,000. Web id: 1184418
• project grants, worth up to £300,000 each. Web id: 254739
Contact: Craig Bullock
Email: research@arthritisresearchuk.org
Deadline: 3 June 2015 [79]

BBSRC/FSA future leaders

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and the Food Standards Agency invite applications for...
Women more likely to pursue STEM careers with fewer men around

There is a greater chance that women will stay in fields that are dominated by men if they get to work in small groups comprising high proportions of women, a study has suggested.

The author of the research, Nilanjana Dasgupta, says that universities and colleges should pay attention to the composition of student work groups because it can influence the likelihood of women pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. “Group composition affects students’ levels of involvement and their likelihood to speak up,” says Dasgupta, a professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who studies implicit bias. “And that may influence their career trajectories.”

The research was published on 6 April in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It found that women on an undergraduate degree programme in engineering were less anxious when they worked in groups with more women than men or equal numbers of both. Women also spoke up more when they were in the majority than when they were in the minority or the numbers were equal.

Dasgupta describes gender stereotypes as “viruses” that affect people’s minds, and believes they can be fought by “social vaccines” such as,

Medical funders aim to help women into leadership roles

Four UK funders of medical research have launched a pilot scheme that aims to help overcome the persistent gender disparity at senior academic levels.

The Sustain programme is a joint venture between the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Society, the Royal College of Physicians and the Medical Research Council. The one-year scheme will offer workshops and training sessions for up-and-coming women in the field, along with one-to-one mentoring from senior AMS fellows.

Just 17 per cent of UK clinical professors are women, according to a 2013 survey from the Medical Schools Council, and this is despite the fact that women have now outnumbered men at medical school for more than 20 years.

Susan Wray, a professor of physiology at the University of Liverpool, will be one of the mentors who have advanced but not along a “straight-arrow career progression” will benefit those with family commitments, she says.

The programme is initially open to 270 holders of specified fellowships and grants. A total of 20 applicants will be randomly selected to participate. This is in part because the reference group wanted to send the right message to unsuccessful applicants. “Nobody will be judged by some committee of the great and the good to have been inadequate; it’ll just be the luck of the draw,” says Wray. “We hope to run the scheme again and want people to reapply.”

In fact, the organisers hope to extend the scheme next year and are working on how to evaluate its effectiveness so that other funders want to come on board.

“I wish that something like this had been around when I was younger,” Wray concludes, “because I suffered from that lack of confidence we’re trying to overcome.”
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Web id: 1178195
Email: postdoc.fellowships@bbsrc.ac.uk
Deadline: 4 June 2015 [80]

Mental health scholarships
Mental Health Research UK and the Schizophrenia Research Fund invite applications for their PhD scholarships. These support research in the field of anxiety disorder or schizophrenia. Scholarships are worth up to £12,000 each.

Web id: 1162590
Contact: David Pugh
Email: trustees@mhruk.org
Deadline: 12 June 2015 [81]

Equine research grants
The Horserace Betting Levy Board invites applications for its equine veterinary research grants. These support basic, applied or clinical research projects that aim to improve the health and welfare of horses, particularly the racing or breeding thoroughbred. There is no set maximum or minimum amount for grants awarded.

Web id: 208918
Email: equine.grants@hhb.org.uk
Deadline: 15 June 2015 [82]

Laboratory refurbishment
The Royal Society invites applications for the Wolfson laboratory refurbishment grants. These enable scientists in the UK to refurbish or renovate their research laboratories. Grants are worth up to £250,000 each.

Web id: 201637
Email: labrefurbishment@royalsociety.org
Deadline: 17 June 2015 [83]

Breast cancer grants
Breast Cancer Campaign invites applications for the following grants:

- PhD studentships, worth up to £95,000, excluding conference travel costs.

Web id: 188829
Project grants, worth approximately £65,000 per year up to three years.

Web id: 252216
Email: grants_admin@breastcancer-campaign.org
Deadline: 1 July 2015 [85]

Medical PhD studentships
Medical Research Scotland invites applications for its PhD studentships. These enable Scottish universities or research institutions, working in conjunction with a trading company, involved in medically-relevant life sciences research, to deliver a PhD studentship programme. Awards fund four-year PhD studentships, including stipends, laboratory expenses, travel allowances and consumables.

Web id: 1163133
Contact: Turcan Connell
Email: applications@medicalresearch-scotland.org.uk
Deadline: 2 July 2015 [87]

Built environment fellowship
The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 invites applications for its built environment fellowship. This supports research on cycle routes. The fellowship is worth £50,000 per year for a duration of two years.

Web id: 258118
Email: royalcom1851@imperial.ac.uk
Deadline: 15 July 2015 [89]

Civil engineering grants
The Institution of Civil Engineers invites applications for its research and development enabling fund. This promotes the technical development of civil engineering by encouraging research in its early stages, assessing viability of concepts, and by providing a basis for applying elsewhere to secure more substantial support. Grants are worth up to £25,000 each.

Web id: 1170004
Email: patricia.rustum@icce.org.uk
Deadline: 31 July 2015 [90]

Human nutrition research
The Rank Prize Funds’ nutrition committee invites applications for its new lecturer awards. These support scientists who are conducting research in an area of human nutrition or crop science. Awards are worth up to £20,000 each.

Web id: 1172743
Email: enquiries@rankprize.org
Deadline: 28 August 2015 [91]

Leverhulme art residencies
The Leverhulme Trust invites applications for its artists in residence grants. These enable UK universities and museums to foster a new creative collaboration with an artist working in a discipline outside the institution’s usual curriculum. Grants are worth up to £15,000 each.

Web id: 213802
Deadline: 10 September 2015 [94]

Analytical chemistry award
The Royal Chemistry Society invites applications for the TWM West analytical fellowships. These enable early-career analytical chemists within five years of their first permanent full-time junior post to develop a PhD studentship programme. Awards fund four-year PhD studentships, including stipends, laboratory expenses, travel allowances and consumables.

Web id: 1177553
Email: david.ferguson@nttworld.com
Deadline: 11 September 2015 [95]

Welcome society awards
The Wellcome Trust invites applications for its society awards. These support projects that enable the public to explore biomedical science, its impact on society and culture, its historical roots and the ethical questions that it raises. Awards are worth up to £30,000 each.

Web id: 261000
Email: pegrants@wellcome.ac.uk
Deadline: 18 September 2015 [97]

Cancer research grants
The North West Cancer Research Fund invites applications for the following grants:

- grants under the Reginald Bellis bequest. The budget is worth £900 every year.

Web id: 207665
Project grants, worth on average £50,000 for projects lasting up to three years.

Web id: 207663
Contact: Dominique Hare
Deadline: 1 October 2015 [99]

Alzheimer’s research awards
Alzheimer’s Research UK invites applications for the following awards:

- PhD scholarship, including a stipend of up to £16,000 per year, coverage of tuition fees and up to £15,000 for research and travel costs.

Web id: 204425
Project pilot grants, worth up to £50,000 each over a maximum period of two years.

Web id: 257030
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [106]

European highlights
New opportunities from European funders, excluding funders based in the UK.

Antibacterial research
The Innovative Medicines Initiative’s New Drugs for Bad Bugs programme invites proposals for its COMBACTE open call. This aims to identify potential replacement antimicrobial agents or approaches that could fulfil the overall objectives of the project, by conducting clinical trials with novel trial designs to deliver safety, pharmacokinetic and proof of efficacy data for novel agents directed towards treatment, prevention or of infections due to priority pathogens. The budget is approximately 50 million € (€36.3m).

Web id: 1184469
Email: opencall@combacte.com
Deadline: 29 April 2015 [105]

EU education and youth
The Directorate-General for Education and Culture invites tenders to carry out studies supporting European cooperation in education and youth. The tenderer will develop a model for sexually transmitted infections among sex workers in Europe by taking into account the macro-contextual structure, community organisations, migration status, work environment, sexual networks and patterns and acquisition and transmission dynamics. The contract is worth €180,000 (£130,600) up to three years.

Web id: 1184479
Email: procurement@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [112]

EU sustainability assessments
The Directorate-General for Energy invites tenders to develop a new framework and tool to assess voluntary schemes and agreements used for sustainability claims. The tenderer will assist the Commission in assessing voluntary schemes and agreements used for sustainability claims. Further improve the methodology of such assessment, develop new approaches for sustainability certification and review the operation of the current regime. The contract is estimated to be worth €600,000 (€435,600) over four years.

Web id: 1184409
Contact: Jan Pakulski
Email: eac-47-2014-call@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 30 April 2015 [106]

EU advertising policy
The Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology invites tenders for a study on defining a new framework for the monitoring of audiovisual media directive advertising rules in the internet sector. The tenderer will identify criteria in view of selecting the topics and rules on audiovisual commercial communications which would require monitoring under the audiovisual media directive. The contract is worth up to €290,000 (£220,500).

Web id: 1184500
Contact: Lorena Boixo Alonso
Email: cnect-2-r2@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 6 May 2015 [113]

EU infectious diseases
The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control invites tenders for evidence-based guidance on screening for infectious diseases among migrants, to further improve the methodology of such assessment, develop new approaches for sustainability certification and review the operation of the current regime. The contract is estimated to be worth €600,000 (€435,600) over four years.

Web id: 1184511
Contact: Enrico D’Ippolito
Email: ecdc-monitoring@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [108]

EU diversity research
The Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers invites tenders for a study on defining a new framework for the monitoring of audiovisual media directive advertising rules in the internet sector. The tenderer will produce a report on the business case for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex inclusion in companies, and one on the benefits of LGBTI diversity for cities and regions. The tenderer will also explore the economic case of LGBTI non-discrimination and inclusion.

Web id: 1184304
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [110]

EU sexual health
The European Centre for Disease Control invites tenders to find the structural determinants of sexually transmitted infections among sex workers. The tenderer will develop a model for sexually transmitted infections among sex workers in Europe by taking into account the macro-contextual structure, community organisations, migration status, work environment, sexual networks and patterns and acquisition and transmission dynamics. The contract is worth €180,000 (£130,600) up to three years.

Web id: 1184479
Email: procurement@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 5 May 2015 [112]
to the EU and EEA. The tenderer will develop evidence-based guidance on infectious diseases among migrants. The contract has an estimated value of €409,000 (£290,000). Web id: 1184550 Email: procurement@ecdc.europa.eu Deadline: 13 May 2015 [114]

EU gender equality tool
The European Institute for Gender Equality invites tenders to integrate gender equality into research performing organisations and universities. The tenderer will integrate gender equality into research performing organisations and universities, and develop an online tool for competence development on the implementation of gender equality in research institutions. The estimated value of the contract is €330,000 (£239,500). Web id: 1184412 Contact: Vera Zavonov Email: procurement@eige.europa.eu Deadline: 18 May 2015 [115]

EU occupational health
The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work invites tenders to estimate the costs of work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths at the European level. The estimated value of the contract is €450,000 (£326,600). Web id: 1184546 Email: information@osha.europa.eu Deadline: 8 June 2015 [119]

EU nutrition research
JPIA Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life invites proposals for its joint action call – nutrition and cognitive function. This supports research on the interrelation of diet and cognitive function. The estimated total budget is €9.18 million (£6.7m). Web id: 1183791 Contact: Friederike Bathe Email: nutrition-hdi@dir.de Deadline: 8 June 2015 [120]

Science and journalism
The VolkswagenStiftung invites applications for its science and data-driven journalism grants. These aim to initiate joint research and reporting projects which enable researchers and journalists to learn from each other and to generate new impulses for their respective activities. Grants are worth up to €100,000 (£72,000) each. Web id: 1184360 Contact: Thomas Brunotte Email: brunotte@volkswagenstiftung.de Deadline: 15 June 2015 [121]

EU forecast research
The European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasts invites the following tenders:
- to produce seasonal forecast data for a multi-modal system. The budget is worth up to €2.5 million (£1.8).
- to provide a proof-of-concept demonstration of the value chain from Earth observation and model outputs for climate information. Lots are worth between €1.2m and €1.6m. The total budget is worth €3.8m. Web id: 1184542
- to provide and continuously evaluate the Copernicus atmosphere modelling service products related to solar radiation. The budget is worth between €1.1m and €1.6m. Web id: 1184548
- to support Copernicus atmosphere modelling service products users. The budget is worth between €2.25m and €2.83m. Web id: 1184554 Deadline: 10 June 2015 [21.1]

EU employee involvement
The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion invites proposals for its call on information, consultation and participation of representatives of undertakings. This supports projects that aim to develop employee involve-ment in undertakings, meaning any organization through which employees representatives may exercise an influence on decisions to be taken within the company; in particular by raising awareness of a company’s contribution to the application of EU law and policies in this area. The budget is worth approximately €7.12 million (£5.17m). Web id: 1184475 Email: empl-vp-2015-003@ec.europa.eu Deadline: 22 June 2015 [122]

EU H2020 air traffic
The Single European Sky ATM Joint Undertaking, under Horizon 2020: Societal Challenges, invites applications for its exploratory research first call for proposals. This aims to drive the development and evaluation of innovative or unconventional ideas, concepts, methods and technologies which can define and deliver the performance required for the next generation of European air traffic management system, and thus contributing to its successful evolution. Propositions may receive up to €1 million (£742,300) each. Web id: 1184426 Deadline: 25 June 2015 [123]

Cardiovascular prize
The European Society of Cardiology’s Acute Cardiovascular Care Association invites applications for its research prize in acute cardiovascular care. This rewards unpublished clinical or translational research applied to the development of novel therapeutic, diagnostic and logistical strategies to improve patient care and long-term outcomes. The prize is worth €3,000 (£2,200). Web id: 1184286 Deadline: 30 June 2015 [124]

Haematology awards
The European Hematology Association invites applications for the following awards:
- advanced short-term collaboration award, worth up to €20,000 (£14,500).
- junior short-term collaboration award as part of the EHA’s career development programme, worth up to €10,000.

Web id: 1184341 Email: fellowships.grants@ehaweb.eu Deadline: 3 August 2015 [126]

Cardiovascular training
The European Society of Cardiology’s Cardiovascular Imaging Association invites applications for its training grants. These enable young researchers in the field of non-invasive imaging modalities to expand their skills in a high-standard clinical centre or university in a large domain expertise within an ESC member country other than their own. Grants are worth €25,000 (£18,100) each. Web id: 1183320 Email: ecr@escardio.org Deadline: 30 September 2015 [127]

Gastroenterology research
The European Society of Gastroenterology invites applications for its research prize. This supports excellence in basic science and translational or clinical research. The award is worth €100,000 (£72,600). Web id: 2513335 Contact: Silvia Molinari Email: s.molinari@unifr.ch Deadline: 15 May 2015 [130]

Forestry research
Nordic Forest Research, in collaboration with the North European Regional Office of the European Forest Institute, invites applications for grants to support net-work activities. These aim to increase collaboration and establish better contact between the forest research communities in the Nordic, Baltic and the North Atlantic regions. Grants are worth between SEK100,000 (£7,700) and SEK250,000 over one year. Web id: 1806044 Contact: Inga Bödeker Email: boeder.sns@slu.se Deadline: 1 June 2015 [136]

EU Erasmus entrepreneurs
The Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry invites proposals for its Erasmus call for young entrepreneurs. This aims to expand and strengthen the existing network of intermediary organisations which act as local contact points for newly established entrepreneurs as well as experienced entrepreneurs in the participating countries. Grants are worth up to €500,000 (£362,400) each at a maximum co-funding rate of 90 per cent. Web id: 1119232 Email: eamse-cosme-eye-call@ec.europa.eu Deadline: 3 June 2015 [137]
Type 2 diabetes
The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes and Merck, Sharp & Dohme invite proposals for their European research programme on new targets for type 2 diabetes. This aims to stimulate and accelerate European research focusing on the identification and molecular understanding of new targets for the treatment of type 2 diabetes. Grants are worth up to €100,000 (£72,600) each.
Web id: 1172208
Email: foundation@ead.org
Deadline: 15 June 2015

EU civil protection exercises
The Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection invites proposals for civil protection mechanism exercises. These aim to improve civil protection preparedness and response to all kinds of disasters, including marine pollution, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear disasters, as well as combined disasters and disasters simultaneously affecting a number of countries. The budget is €3.8 million (£2.8m) and the maximum co-financing rate is 85 per cent with a maximum of €1m for each proposal.
Web id: 1183153
Email: echo-civil-protection-calls@ec.europa.eu
Deadline: 24 June 2015

Danish technology grants
The Villum Foundation, within the Velux foundations, invites applications for its young investigator programme. This enables young researchers in science and technology to establish their own independent research profiles. Grants are worth up to DKK7 million (£697,100).
Web id: 1164089
Contact: Lars Arnskov Olsen
Email: lao@veluxfoundsion.dk
Deadline: 20 June 2015

Complex systems prize
The Crt Foundation, with the support of the ISI Foundation, invites nominations for the Lagrange-Galilei prize. This recognises research achievements in the field of complex systems. The prize is worth €50,000 (£36,200).
Web id: 185105
Email: tismanagement@isi.it
Deadline: 30 June 2015

EU satellite navigation prizes
The European Global Navigation Satellite System Supervisory Agency invites proposals for the European satellite navigation competition. This aims to gather ideas and solutions for the commercial application of satellite navigation and location services. The overall budget is approximately €1 million (£724,600).
Web id: 1159204
Contact: Andreas Bippelhofer
Deadline: 30 June 2015

Diabetes research
The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes, in collaboration with other funders, invites applications for the following opportunities:
• grants in type 1 diabetes research, normally worth up to €100,000 (£72,600) for one year or longer, but grants up to €400,000 may be considered for clinical projects.
Web id: 201616

•reciprocal travel research fellowships, worth €50,000.
Web id: 1166990
Email: foundation@ead.org
Deadline: 1 July 2015

Particle physics thesis grant
The European Organisation for Nuclear Research invites applications for the Atlas PhD grants. These encourage young doctoral students in particle physics, including computing for physics, to obtain world-class exposure, supervision and training within the ATLAS collaboration. Grants are worth CHF3,679 (£2,600) per month.
Web id: 1173947
Deadline: 20 July 2015

Young scientist awards
The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation invites applications for the Sofia Kovalevskaja award. This enables young researchers from abroad to establish research groups at institutions in Germany. The award is worth €1.65 million (£1.2m).
Web id: 175743
Email: info@avh.de
Deadline: 31 July 2015

Haematology fellowships
The European Hematology Association invites applications for the following fellowships:
• clinical research fellowships, worth up to €240,000 (£173,900).
Web id: 1179803
• joint fellowship programme, worth up to €100,000.
Web id: 1161545
• non-clinical advanced research fellowships, worth up to €240,000 each.
Web id: 1179809
• non-clinical junior research fellowships, worth up to €150,000 each.
Web id: 1179805
Email: fellowships.grants@eha.eu
Deadline: 3 August 2015

CERN engineering fellowships
The European Organisation for Nuclear Research invites applications for the following fellowships:
• junior fellowships, within the graduate engineering training programme.
Web id: 206707
• senior fellowships, within the graduate engineering training programme.
Web id: 1161477
• senior fellowships, worth up to €206,000.
Web id: 206706
Deadline: 7 September 2015

Science and technology
The European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) invites applications for its open call. Funding supports networking activities, such as meetings, short-term scientific missions, training schools and dissemination activities in the areas of science and technology. Funding is worth €130,000 (£94,200) per year for four years.
Web id: 200543
Email: opencall@cost.eu
Deadline: 8 September 2015

Mathematics prize
The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters invites nominations for the Abel prize. This recognises outstanding scientific work in the field of mathematics, including mathematical aspects of computer science, mathematical physics, probability, numerical analysis and scientific computing, statistics and applications of mathematics in the sciences. The prize is worth NOK6 million (£504,500).
Web id: 189271
Email: abelprix@dnva.no
Deadline: 15 September 2015

CERN physics programme
The European Organisation for Nuclear Research invites applications for the following opportunities:
• corresponding associates programme.
Web id: 259704
• scientific associates programme.
Web id: 251966
Deadline: 18 September 2015

Rest of world
Opportunities from funders outside of the UK, the US and the EU.

Domestic violence projects
The Public Health Agency of Canada invites letters of intent for its call on supporting the health of victims of domestic violence and child abuse through community programmes. This aims to establish and advance community-based and multisectoral projects to address the needs of victims of domestic violence and child abuse, and those at risk of these forms of violence. Awards are worth at least CA$125,000 (£67,600) per year over two to five years.
Web id: 1183920
Email: chp-v-pscv@phac-aspc.gc.ca
No deadline

Mineral deposit exploitation
The Australian Academy of Science, in collaboration with Rio Tinto, invites applications for the Haddon Forrester King medal. This recognises contributions to Earth and related sciences of particular relevance to the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of mineral deposits. The award is worth up to AU$10,000 (£5,200).
Web id: 1171916
Email: awards@science.org.au
Deadline: 30 April 2015

Visiting professorships
The Weizmann Institute of Science invites applications for its visiting professorships. These support scientists from institutions in the rest of world (excluding the US, Canada, Europe and the UK) who wish to undertake research in Israel. Funding may be for periods of one to two years.
Web id: 1178016
Email: visiting.proposal@weizmann.ac.il
Deadline: 31 December 2015

Research internships
The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University invites applications for the Amira Margalith summer research internship. This enables young researchers from an African or North American college or university to intern for one semester at the centre. Recipients receive a stipend of US$3,000 (£1,600).
Web id: 1174571
Contact: Dayancenter@post.tau.ac.il
Deadline: 28 February 2016

usa
Research Fortnight, 15 April 2015

opportunities from the National Institutes of Health. Recurring NIH calls include the next closing date only.

Alcohol impairment of immune function, host defense and tissue homeostasis (R01; Aids-related)
NIH ref: PA-15-159
Web id: 1165379
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Alcohol impairment of immune function, host defense and tissue homeostasis (R01)
NIH ref: PA-15-159
Web id: 1165378
Deadline: 5 June 2015

Clinical trials to test the effectiveness of treatment, preventive and services interventions (collaborative R01)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-415
Web id: 1178015
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Clinical trials to test the effectiveness of treatment, preventive and services interventions (R01)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-420
Web id: 1178014
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Exploratory clinical trials of novel interventions for mental disorders (R21/R33)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-405
Web id: 1178013
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Exploratory clinical trials of novel interventions for mental disorders (R21)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-404
Web id: 1178012
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Exploratory clinical trials of novel interventions for mental disorders (R01)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-403
Web id: 1178011
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot effectiveness trials for treatment, preventive and services interventions (R34)
NIH ref: RFA-MH-16-410
Web id: 1178010
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot feasibility clinical research grants in kidney diseases (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-161
Web id: 1164008
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-163
Web id: 1164007
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-162
Web id: 1164006
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-160
Web id: 1164005
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-159
Web id: 1164004
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-158
Web id: 1164003
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-157
Web id: 1164002
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-156
Web id: 1164001
Deadline: 15 June 2015

Pilot and feasibility clinical research grants in urologic disorders (R21)
NIH ref: PAR-15-155
Web id: 1164000
Deadline: 15 June 2015

policy diary

April
http://rsrch.co/19Bi09

May
http://rsrch.co/1Khux1G
20 Developing Strategic Partnerships, Leicester. http://rsrch.co/11vR6B

June
http://rsrch.co/1FqcXZ0
http://rsrch.co/1CbMqj
http://rsrch.co/1ErZ5w
18 ESRC: Looking after and Managing your Research Data, Essex.
http://rsrch.co/18KUXxn
• Missenden Centre: Making your research grant proposal successful, London. To 19.
http://rsrch.co/1WhCnc4
23 WHEF: The Future for Outward Mobility, London.
http://rsrch.co/1ErZ4j
24 ESRC: Celebrating Impact Prize Awards, London.
http://rsrch.co/1tLiI2p
http://rsrch.co/1LeFgZQ

July
7 WHEF: Expanding the Role of Universities in Local Economic Growth, London.
http://rsrch.co/1yr39y
http://rsrch.co/17Zp4zX
http://rsrch.co/1EfqzNT

September
8 Vitae: Researcher Development International Conference 2015, Manchester. To 9.
http://rsrch.co/13s3jpf

Humanities mega journal seeks UK backing

UK university libraries are being encouraged to support a planned open-access journal that aims to create a radically different business model for academic publishing. The project to establish an online open-access journal covering all the humanities has already received backing from 60 academic institutions in the United States and Canada and its organisers hope to begin recruiting UK institutions over the coming months. The plan was created by the Open Library of Humanities which last year won a grant from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation to develop the concept.

MRC closes and opens Oxford brain units

A 30-year-old Medical Research Council brain research unit at the University of Oxford closed down one day and was replaced the following day by the MRC Brain Network Dynamics Unit. The MRC Anatomical Neuropharmacology Unit, led by director Peter Somogyi and associate director Paul Bolam, closed on 31 March. MRC chief executive John Savill said the unit had been fundamental in advancing understanding of brain connections.

German studies hub announced at Cambridge

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) will provide €1 million (£730,000) over five years to create a research hub for German studies at the University of Cambridge, the UK Science and Innovation Network has announced. The network said that the hub would enable public exploration by supporting workshops and collaborations with German universities, as well as public debates and conferences.

Food professor named BBSRC innovator of the year

Ian Givens, head of food production and quality at the University of Reading, has been named innovator of the year by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. The competition recognises BBSRC-funded researchers who have used their research for social and economic benefits.

Genomics catalogue gains functionality in Cambridge

In a move to make genome-wide association studies data more readily available, a data catalogue has moved to a new host at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory’s European Bioinformatics Institute in Cambridge, where it has been given a more flexible infrastructure. The rebuilt Genome-wide Association Studies catalogue, which contains data about the links between genetic sequence variations and traits such as disease, can be searched using more fields and without the whole database having to be downloaded.

EPSRC bolsters adviser teams

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council has announced 35 appointments to its strategic advisory teams. The three-year appointments include individuals from industry; three lecturers from each of the universities of Leeds and Edinburgh; and two from each of University College London and the universities of Reading, Manchester and Liverpool.
Framework programme falls short on international participation

The European Commission has failed to promote non-European involvement in Horizon 2020 and must devise a clear plan to prevent a further decline in participation, advisers and participants have said.

In 2012, the Commission announced that it would no longer automatically fund the participation of countries including the BRICs: Brazil, Russia, India and China. It now expects them to pay their own way unless the work is “strategically important” to the European Union’s research performance.

But this appears to have backfired, as international participation has dipped well below the 5 per cent level recorded between 2007 and 2013. According to Alan Cross, the deputy head of Horizon 2020 policy in the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, preliminary figures from the first year of Horizon 2020 show a 40 per cent decrease compared with Framework 7.

The Commission has pledged to increase international involvement—and any decline will have serious consequences for the programme’s success as research becomes increasingly globalised. Commission advisers and national representatives say the Commission urgently needs to re-evaluate its measures.

“The strong links and relations with countries developed in the past need to be built on, not broken down,” says Katherine Isaacs, the head of European programmes at the University of Pisa. “It’s a terrible waste.”

Dan Andrée, the chairman of the EU’s Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation, says the Commission should extend its list of priority topics for which the BRIC countries can receive funding. Meanwhile, the drop in participation from Russia is likely to be a result of political issues as well as a loss of funding, he says—meaning the Commission could also consider steps to mitigate the effects of foreign policy on scientific cooperation.

According to Manfred Horvat, the chairman of the Commission’s advisory group on international cooperation in Horizon 2020, the Commission should focus on translating its strategic aims into concrete details in the 2016-17 work programmes. As it stands, there is not much information on how its international strategy will be implemented, he says, and the Commission must guarantee “the right instruments, actions and research proposals” to help participants.

Andréé says the Commission is considering setting up a support facility for non-EU members who want to take part in the 2016-17 work programmes. And Kostas Glinos, the head of strategy for international cooperation at DG Research, said the Commission was seeking additional mechanisms to set up joint projects with China and the United States.

However, a Commission spokeswoman said that no details would be available until the first annual review of Horizon 2020 was published, which is expected to be by the end of June.

by Jenny Maukola jemnews@ResearchResearch.com

Funders call for ‘science-friendly’ copyright law

A planned reform of European copyright legislation should permit academics to mine legally accessed publications, a Science Europe working group has recommended. Representatives of national funders and research organisations say academic work is hindered by barriers to data mining, which uses computer software to scan large amounts of information, and that this should be addressed in a reform of EU copyright law in 2016.

EU approves Nature-Springer merger

A planned merger between the publisher of the journal Nature and the Springer group has been approved by the European Commission. Germany’s Holtzbrinck Publishing Group, which owns the Macmillan Science and Education group and publishes journals including Nature and Scientific American, will combine with the Netherlands-based Springer Science+Business Media, which produces more than 2,900 academic publications.

Controversial shale gas report turns up

The French newspaper Le Figaro has published the contents of a French government-commissioned report on shale gas extraction, claiming that it was never made public because it supported an alternative to fracking, which has been banned in France since 2011. The report was completed in 2014 and advocates a trial of a shale gas extraction technique that uses a nonflammable form of propane rather than hydraulic fracturing and predicts considerable economic benefits for France if the country exploits its shale gas reserves.

ERC applications down in 2014

The European Research Council received far fewer proposals in 2014 than the previous year, the council’s annual report has said. Its 2014 work programmes received 8,084 proposals—a 14 per cent decrease from 2013. Proposals for Consolidator Grants—for researchers with more than seven years’ post-PhD experience—fell by 31 per cent. Proposals for Starting Grants and Advanced Grants fell by 2 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.
Scientists may have unwittingly convinced politicians that their engagement is not welcome.

Scientific elitism helps to keep science policy on the margins

Science has become the equivalent, in British politics, of motherhood and apple pie. Every party agrees that it’s a nice thing and we should have more of it. Both of the two largest parties claim credit for supporting it. At a recent pre-election science hustings in the House of Commons, Julia Reid—an MEP for the UK Independence Party—went so far as to say that we should have more scientists immigrating to the UK.

Yet despite these warm words, political support for science—in deed rather than just in word—hasn’t changed much. In the five years I spent working in and around the British political establishment, I saw that almost nobody was advocating a step change in how science was seen and supported. We make do with flat-cash settlements here and reasonable capital injections there, but there is no real grand vision and relatively little trajectory.

It is traditional to blame our supposedly myopic political classes for the state of affairs we find ourselves in. If only they could see the potential and grandeur of science; if only they weren’t all philosophy, politics and economics graduates and lawyers who prefer scoring political points to introducing evidence-based policy; and if only they weren’t chasing the easy votes and cheap headlines rather than the big but slow payoff that science provides. If only, if only.

But there’s an argument to be made that, when it comes to building political support for science, scientists may be their own worst enemies. For instance, fierce advocacy of the Haldane principle, which suggests that scientists alone should make decisions about science, may have unwittingly convinced politicians and the public that their intellectual and practical engagement is not welcome.

I’d argue that there are two big things that the science lobby needs to achieve, and both of them are made very difficult by the framing of science as an elite profession rather than a collectively owned part of our culture.

The first is the establishment of a genuine, visible science caucus in parliament. We already have the beginnings of this, thanks to the smattering of pro-science politicians across the parties, such as Chi Onwurah, Julian Huppert and George Freeman. But beyond the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, there’s little space or incentive for them to politicise science across party boundaries. This stands in contrast to any number of other issues, from reproductive health to free speech.

The second change needed is to open up membership of that caucus to non-scientists. There remains an unhelpful assumption among the scientific establishment, sometimes unspoken, that someone who isn’t a scientist can’t be relied upon to have a view on science policy or be allowed to be part of the scientific community.

At best, the view goes, non-scientists could conceivably be second-rate advocates for the work of real scientists. Even David Willetts, the near-universally applauded science minister who stepped down last summer, was asked by some scientists on his appointment how he could be a good science minister without possessing a scientific background.

The key to bringing about both of these shifts is for it to actually be in politicians’ self-interest to get involved in science policy, regardless of their educational and professional backgrounds. We need to have a society in which political support for science translates into public votes, rather than just applause from scientists.

That’s unlikely to happen as long as the only people who identify themselves as being part of the scientific community are scientists. In other fields, such as cycling, healthcare and party politics, the non-professionals who feel a sense of ownership of the field are the ones who make it politically important.

Most politicians and much of the wider public still see science as primarily the domain of scientists. Ultimately, science needs to broaden its appeal so that more politicians feel they have the licence, from both the public and the scientific establishment, to push their parties to be bolder when it comes to making science policy.

This can’t be done by issuing economic impact reports and case studies alone, nor will it happen overnight. If we’re serious about getting politicians to help move science closer to the centre of the UK’s political culture and civil society, we need to move beyond simply telling politicians how important science is, and towards a situation where the public is demanding action from them.

Until then, let’s not be too surprised when politicians pay more attention to whatever’s in their mailbag; that is their job, after all.

Imran Khan is the chief executive of the British Science Association (www.britishscienceassociation.org), which promotes science as a part of culture and society.
An extended pesticide ban is vital to our bee population

In spring 2012, my postdoc Penelope Whitehorn and I published a paper in Science on the effects of neonicotinoid pesticides on bumblebee colonies. It appeared to show that doses of these chemicals, of the amount that bees would encounter if they fed on a treated oilseed rape crop, caused greatly reduced colony growth and an 85 per cent drop in production of new queens. The work appeared alongside another paper from a French group showing that the same chemicals impaired honeybee navigation, possibly leading to colony collapse if too many worker bees became lost.

These chemicals are the world’s most widely used insecticides, and these studies, which built on previous work, suggested that they had got through the regulatory process without proper evaluation of the threat they posed to bees. The European Union asked the European Food Safety Authority to conduct a review of their safety, and in January 2013 Efsa announced that neonicotinoids posed “an unacceptable risk” to bees.

As a direct result, a moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids was proposed and, in April 2013, approved by the European Parliament. There was fierce lobbying against the moratorium, and the UK government voted against it, but nonetheless it came into effect in December 2013, for two years.

It prohibits the use of three neonicotinoids on flowering crops such as oilseed rape, and the sowing of treated seeds during the spring or summer, when bees are foraging. But it allows their continued use on crops such as winter wheat and horticultural crops, as well as in gardens and on pets. If you have a dog or cat, you probably apply drops of neonicotinoids to the back of its neck.

Soon, a decision will need to be taken on whether the moratorium should continue or be allowed to lapse. Considerably more evidence has accumulated to inform this decision. A number of recent studies on bumblebees suggest that field-realistic doses of neonicotinoids increase mortality and susceptibility to disease, and reduce fecundity, pollen collection and overall colony performance, corroborating our 2012 study.

The evidence for honeybees is less clear, with the agrochemical industry having funded some field trials that have failed to find negative effects at the colony level—generating yet more controversy as to whether it is appropriate for industry to fund or conduct its own studies of the safety of its products.

One point widely agreed among scientists is that the regulatory system for pesticides is woefully inadequate at capturing what happens to organisms in the real world. It does not take into account sublethal or chronic effects, or simultaneous exposure to multiple pesticides and other stressors. More broadly, new work suggests that bees are the canary in the coalmine—declines in aquatic insects, butterflies and insectivorous birds have all been linked to neonicotinoid pollution. I very much hope that the moratorium is not allowed to lapse.

One might well ask whether bee populations have improved during the moratorium. Unfortunately, there is no systematic monitoring of wild bee populations, so we do not know. Monitoring wild pollinators at a nationwide scale is challenging, and one of the most promising ways forward is to enlist the aid of the public.

My guess is that it is too soon to expect a positive effect of the moratorium: neonicotinoids are highly persistent in the environment, and quite a lot of them are still being used, so it would be surprising if bee health had significantly improved.

In any case, those of us who study bees agree that they face many problems besides neonicotinoids. Diseases and parasites have invaded from abroad, there are not many flowers, and bees are exposed to a cocktail of different pesticides throughout their lives. We need to work on all of these problems if we want to ensure a healthy, diverse population of wild pollinators.

The debate about neonicotinoids and bees has raised broader issues about food production and sustainability. How do we feed people without wiping much biodiversity from the planet, degrading soils and polluting natural habitats? Is the existing model of food production, based on intensive monocultures dependent on very high levels of agrochemical inputs—and, in the EU, on enormous public subsidy—the best way forward? Bees epitomise this debate: if modern farmland cannot sustain bees, can it really sustain people in the long term?

Something to add? Email comment@researchresearch.com

‘The regulatory system for pesticides does not capture what happens to organisms in the real world.’

Dave Goulson is a professor of biology at the University of Sussex. His most recent book is A Buzz in the Meadow (Jonathan Cape 2014). To register interest in the Buzz Club, visit http://rsrch.co/1Ctvj6c.
Road to nowhere

Transport should be one of the most interdisciplinary, evidence-hungry areas of policy. Instead, it’s a dog’s dinner, says Fred Pearce.

If you ask Google for links relating to British transport policy, nine of its first ten suggestions are pages about the British Transport Police. You can’t blame the search engine for failing to locate such a policy—however you look at it, there are few signs of a coherent, evidence-based approach to investment priorities.

The coalition has a policy for HS2, the high-speed train from London to the north: it wants it. And it has one for a new runway for London, even though both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats ruled out additional runways for Heathrow and Gatwick before the last election. To get around that difficulty, the government set up an Airports Commission, chaired by the economist Howard Davies, which will only report after the election.

Bicycles are definitely a good thing, even if there has been little to change the common perception that urban cycling in the UK requires nerves of steel and possibly a death wish. But roads are in limbo, and buses are supported in theory but declining in practice.

The question is whether all this adds up. What are the implications of spending £45 billion on HS2 for the rest of the transport network, including other badly needed rail investment? Would it reduce or increase the need for airport capacity in the south-east? There is little firm policy on these questions, and even less analysis.

Last month, seemingly fearful that northerners would be unimpressed with the promise of high-speed rail travel to Manchester and Leeds in 2033, chancellor George Osborne announced plans for investments in city-to-city links across the north. But it’s not clear whether this is an aspiration or a promise.

The sheer scale—and cost—of HS2 makes it the dominant strategic issue. But the financial case has never been thoroughly made. Henry Overman of the London School of Economics and Political Science, one of our foremost economic geographers, resigned as an adviser on the project in 2012 because he concluded that the money would be better spent elsewhere.

Overman says the project’s cost-benefit analysis contains elementary errors that exaggerate the economic benefits by a factor of between six and eight. The claimed gain to the national economy of £15bn a year is nonsense. Faster intercity trains in the north could deliver more pounds in more pockets more cheaply.

Economic models linking connectivity to productivity suggest that HS2 would boost national wages by 0.1 per cent, not the 0.8 per cent claimed by the government. In contrast, cutting 20 minutes from the journey between Manchester and Leeds would add between 1.1 and 2.7 per cent to wages in the 23 local authorities most affected.

Ministers refuse to engage with Overman’s analysis. Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin has brushed off criticism by saying that “people always argue about the unknowns” around big infrastructure projects. So much for evidence-based policy.

There is the same incoherence over the possibility of a second runway at Gatwick or a third at Heathrow. Davies’s remit is unclear on what many opponents regard as the main issue: climate change. In February, the government’s Committee on Climate Change wrote to Davies to underline that cutting greenhouse gas emissions would require limitations on the demand for air travel.

That climate change hasn’t been integrated into the Department for Transport’s thinking is perhaps the central failure of the past five years. This is despite the promises made by both coalition partners when they came to office, despite the legally binding targets to reduce national emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, and despite transport, which is responsible for about a quarter of Britain’s greenhouse gas emissions, being the last major economic sector in which emissions continue to rise.

The department backs electric vehicles, but the national charging network that both coalition partners promised is proving very slow to emerge. The coalition backs biofuels for conventional vehicles, but either it hasn’t read the research showing that producing most such fuels emits as much carbon dioxide as fossil fuels or it doesn’t care, as these emissions will mostly happen elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the benefits from the much-touted Green Bus Fund for purchasing low-carbon vehicles are being squandered by cuts to rural bus subsidies. Some 2,000 services have been lost and bus mileage outside London has fallen since the coalition came to power. Would-be passengers are being forced back into their cars, filling the policy vacuum with pollution and congestion.

More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com

Fred Pearce is an environment consultant for New Scientist magazine.
Forget men not

Men have been shirking their responsibility to talk about sexism in academia. Vice-chancellors have the power to change that, argues Adam Smith.

There are many useful conversations going on about how to improve the position of women in research and science jobs. But they rarely involve men.

It’s difficult to get people to speak on the record about sexist behaviour in academia. The men I’ve spoken to say the issue is real, but that it is too sensitive to confront. A male researcher never knows how a colleague will take it if he privately draws attention to a sexist remark. Those bold enough to do so need to be prepared to be laughed at, argued with, or told that they’re fighting someone else’s battle.

I’m not talking here about overt and malicious discrimination or harassment, but rather the subtle, often unconscious biases that we all carry. Plenty of studies have shown, for example, that men interrupt women more than they interrupt other men. And in many disciplines, men receive a disproportionate share of citations. One council member of a research council says that she feels her views are sometimes marginalised because she is a woman. But pointing this out, she says, would lead to further ostracism.

The best way to confront this bias is for men to start talking about it—to have a public debate in the same way that women have. Some male researchers understandably feel that this is not their place. But until they start to question their own behaviour, and to acknowledge their unconscious bias, actions against sexism will remain superficial.

It’s not good enough to get on with your research and refrain from denigrating your female colleagues. Getting informed about gender equality in the workplace, and avoiding all-male panel discussions, are necessary but insufficient steps. Men are not responsible for their sexist colleagues, but it’s easier for them to challenge them than it is for women, many of whom fear they’ll be dismissed and marginalised for speaking out.

Men themselves have something to gain from such a debate, and from a change in the culture of science. Gender stereotypes keep researchers of both sexes at work late, away from their children, and pressure them into certain types of behaviour. Many men quit science to work fewer hours under more reasonable pressures.

Fathers’ rights are improving, with shared paternity leave available from this month, but that’s no consolation for a researcher whose boss makes him feel like a slacker for taking legally permitted leave. Law change is one thing, but a career break to care for a child or partner is still culturally more acceptable for women than for men. It should not be the case that only certain types of men can succeed in science.

We can only reduce gender bias if men open up and talk about it with compassion and understanding. This will be awkward: men who join in with such conversations will find themselves saying sexist things inadvertently, but sometimes the path to enlightenment passes through embarrassment. Talking about gender will inevitably mean recognising discrimination based on race, sexuality and so on—and everyone will have to admit that they don’t have all the answers.

To make sure we’ve got something to talk about, we need to collect some evidence. Recruitment and promotion panels should include an observer to note how the panellists talk about the candidates and how this differs between the genders—how much airtime is given to different candidates, and the balance of positive and negative comments.

The method has already been on trial in the University of York’s chemistry department, where the evidence showed that women were treated unfairly. One academic says it changed how he thought about recruitment and how people can unwittingly make biased assumptions. Such evidence, which shines a light on unconscious bias, cannot fail to move the scientifically minded.

Action on hiring panels should be led by vice-chancellors, around 85 per cent of whom are men. Launching an evidence-gathering drive, encouraging departments to follow York’s lead, and talking publicly about their own unconscious bias would combine leadership, transparency and self-criticism in the best way.

The aim should not be just to generate another policy document about equal treatment, but to get individuals to think about and change their behaviour. Institutional promises to enact fair policies will remain incomplete until senior staff, especially men, talk openly about their biases.

Focusing on men is a way to shift the stagnating debate about gender equality in academia. Sexism gives the lie to academia’s meritocratic principles. As long as it persists, everyone loses.

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‘Gender stereotypes keep both sexes at work late and pressure them into certain types of behaviour.’
Sign of the times  David Willetts may be taking on new jobs as he leaves parliament but it seems he is yet to give up his old one. Our mole in Westminster reports that right up until parliament dissolved at the end of March a sign in one corridor pointed to Two Brains’ office, labelling him “minister of state for universities and science”—even though Willetts hasn’t held that post since July 2014. The rumours that he’s still pulling the strings in Conservative party science policy ahead of the election might just be true.

Fanning the flames  Authorities in London are investigating a recent underground fire on Kingsway. Flames were bursting from manhole covers very close to the nearby London office of the Medical Research Council. As MRC staff prepare to fend off potentially unwelcome recommendations from Paul Nurse’s review of the research councils, have they been secretly practising rather too enthusiastically with flame-throwers?

Austerity Britain  Prolific tweeter George Freeman, minister for the life sciences, retweeted a link to an article in The Independent titled Love is the Best Medicine, which talked of the need to find new ways of managing our health in these difficult economic times. Look out for clinical trials of the relative benefits of free hugs versus chemotherapy commencing in the next parliament if the Conservatives win in May.

Loose lips  The first words out of David Sweeney’s mouth at a recent conference were that he would not be able to speak as freely as he’d like because of the pre-election period (to the disappointment of all). Hard as he tried, however, he wasn’t careful enough for the discussion chairman, David Willetts, who cried: “I’m surprised by what you CAN say under purdah!” with a grin—and was that a hint of menace?—when the talk was over. “That means I’m in trouble,” Sweeney sighed.

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