Royal Society of Biology News

Strengthening our biosciences community

The last few months proved to be more eventful than many of us anticipated.

With the unexpected announcement of the general election, we worked hard with our partners to ensure that the priorities of the UK science sector were part of the conversation in the run-up to the opening of polling stations.

We contacted candidates in the election and the major party leaders directly, making the case to them that we need to ensure the UK science base remains world-leading, and to ensure all decision-making continues to be informed by evidence and after seeking advice from the scientific community where appropriate.

With the Brexit negotiations having begun we also highlighted the need for reassurance for EU national colleagues who at the moment live and work in the UK. This significant proportion of the UK biosciences community provides an invaluable contribution to the research and innovative work we do, but thousands still do not know if they will be able to remain here come March 2019.

Such uncertainty is leaving countless research groups in a state of limbo when considering their long term plans and goals, and risks slowing down the progress of UK science as a whole.

Through our Brexit analysis we’re looking to capture the impact that negotiations may have on the progression and growth of our sector, and we’re keen to hear from those who are affected by these issues, including members of the Biochemistry Society.

We want to hear from as many researchers, academics and others working in the biosciences as possible, in a bid to understand more about how the changing prospects of the community is impacting research and application.

The maintenance and indeed improving the strength of UK biosciences has always been a priority for us at the RSB; we celebrated the award of Accreditation for another 16 institutions’ bioscience degrees this year, bringing the total number of students enrolled in accredited courses to around 10,000, including many students specialising in biochemistry.

We have now accredited 215 degree programmes across more than 30 higher education institutions to date, and recently awarded the recognition to international programmes including for example the Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in China. A further 213 programmes have also been awarded Advanced Accreditation.

As part of our direct engagement with member organizations we came together with the Biochemical Society and others for another Twilight Meeting in May focused on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I). This offered an important opportunity to share both the challenges we face as membership bodies and also stories and cases of improvement and good practice for ED&I initiatives.

The RSB continues its commitment to the ED&I framework championed by the Science Council, and we will be putting in place additional initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion in all areas of our activity.

In May we held our Annual General Meeting, which drew an unprecedented crowd and saw over one hundred members of the RSB attending; indeed we had to upscale arrangements to a larger venue than anticipated to ensure all could fit!

At the event we were delighted to announce that Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow will take up the presidential reins from May 2018.

We shared with those in attendance at the AGM how much we’ve grown as a membership organization; we’ve seen a significant growth in our membership over the past year, and more membership organizations have joined the RSB alongside the Biochemistry Society.

All of our work is done on behalf of our members and we want members and organizations to feel ownership of the outputs, and hopefully to playing a part in ensuring that the UK biosciences continues to go from strength to strength.

We will continue to work hard to represent the UK biosciences community to those in the upcoming negotiations, and try to ensure the deal secured is the best deal for our sector and all of our collective members.

We plan for the future whilst we work on the present, and we look forward to further strengthening and broadening our biosciences community with your help.