

Independent review of the implementation of RCUK Policy on Open Access Call for Evidence

Response from the British Ecological Society

12 September 2014

1. Established in 1913, the British Ecological Society (BES) is the oldest ecological society in the world. It has over 5,000 members worldwide and its membership is open to all those with an interest in ecology. The vision of the Society is advancing ecology and making it count, and this is fulfilled in part by the development and promotion of world-class ecological science through our portfolio of international journals. The BES's many other activities include the organisation and sponsorship of a wide variety of meetings, the funding of numerous grant schemes, education work and policy work.
2. The BES receives a significant proportion of its income from its publishing programme. As a registered charity, this income is then invested into advancing the academic discipline of ecology through many of the activities listed above.
3. The BES is keen to continue contributing to the debate around open access and the RCUK's policy as any significant changes to publishing models have a major impact on researchers who form the core of our membership and on the business model of the Society. However, we currently have limited evidence to draw on when responding to these points and would encourage RCUK to ensure that this review is ongoing and that the impact on different stakeholders continues to be monitored closely.

Review area of focus

The effectiveness and impact of the RCUK policy on the transition of RCUK funded outputs to Open Access

4. The BES journal portfolio comprises five hybrid subscription journals and one gold OA journal in partnership with Wiley. All journals in the portfolio are compliant with the RCUK policy, offering a gold open access route for authors and enabling them to publish their research under a CC-BY licence. The BES had been operating a hybrid system since 2005 and was already granting free access to content older than two years. In order to become fully compliant with the RCUK policy from 1 April 2013, the BES worked with its publisher Wiley to ensure green open access was available after a 12-month embargo period and to allow RCUK-funded authors to publish under the CC-BY licence.
5. As a total percentage of articles published in the BES's five hybrid journals, gold open access articles remain a small number (less than 5% in 2013) but this number is growing. However, while we have seen an increase in the number of open access articles published over the time period covered by the RCUK mandate, it is difficult to link this directly to the RCUK policy as the increase is coming from both UK and non-UK authors.

6. Since the policy was introduced on 1 April 2013, approximately 35% of the RCUK-funded authors are opting to publish in BES journals via the gold open access route (with 24 out of 69 RCUK-funded authors publishing gold open access). In November 2012 the BES also entered a partnership with Wiley on the fully open access journal *Ecology and Evolution*, which has published a further nine RCUK-funded articles.
7. The BES also participates in the Access to Research initiative which allows users of public libraries to access journal content free of charge.

Compliance with the ‘green’ Open Access embargo periods mandated by the policy

8. The BES journals are fully compliant with the embargo periods mandated by the RCUK policy; however, we rely on researchers to self-archive their articles and so have no data on actual compliance with this policy.

The impact on particular discipline areas of the RCUK requirement for Creative Commons licensing, in particular CC-BY licences for ‘gold’ OA

9. The BES has no evidence to demonstrate the impact of CC-BY licences except that, as highlighted in point 6, 35% of RCUK-funded authors have opted to publish gold open access and sign the CC-BY licence. Many researchers continue to be confused as to the terms of different licences and there is considerable work still required to ensure clarification of these terms so that researchers are able to make informed decisions about the licencing of their work.

How effectively the policy has been communicated, including evidence or views to suggest any further engagement needed.

10. As a result of the Finch Report and various policy changes, including the RCUK policy, the BES has spent more time and effort communicating about open access with its members and authors; this includes running a workshop, writing member briefings and providing clear guidance to authors and members. However, there remains a huge disparity of information available within different institutions and universities require more information on the sharing and adoption of best practices. We believe that Learned Societies have a continued role to play in informing their communities of these changes and would welcome further dialogue with RCUK about how this could be done most effectively across the different disciplines.