



New Phytologist  
Trust

## Plan S consultation

Feedback from the New Phytologist Trust

The New Phytologist Trust is an independent, non-profit-making organization dedicated to the promotion of plant science.

The New Phytologist Trust's main activity is the publication of the journals *New Phytologist*, an international, online-only journal that publishes original research on all aspects of plant science, and *Plants, People, Planet* a new, Open Access interdisciplinary journal focusing on the interface between plant science and society.

Beyond publishing, the New Phytologist Trust supports a wide range of activities, for example the organisation and sponsorship of symposia, workshops and meetings; grant schemes; and the sponsorship of awards, as well as training and mentorship for early career scientists. Combined, these actions have the common goal to promote emerging areas of plant science and to encourage continued progress and innovation in the field of plant science. Activities supported by the Trust include the world-renowned New Phytologist Symposia series; New Phytologist next generation scientists, a symposium series created for and organised by early career researchers; the Tansley Medal for Early career scientists; the funding of focused academic workshops; and the awarding of grants to support various academic and research endeavours in the plant sciences.

In our publishing programme, we strive to ensure that research published in the journals is as widely and openly available as possible. All articles published in *Plants, People, Planet* are Open Access, published under a creative commons licence, and we are committed to ensuring wide access to the work we publish in *New Phytologist*, a so-called 'hybrid journal'. In 2018 12% of articles in *New Phytologist* were published Open Access under a creative commons licence, and 25% of all articles were published as free access, and immediately available to all readers without a subscription. All authors may immediately self-archive the version of record on their own websites or deposit their work in institutional/funder repositories, and authors retain copyright to their work. The New Phytologist Trust supports open science, and access to research, but we are concerned by the lack of clarity in the Plan S proposal and how this will impact upon our community. Below we provide feedback as requested.

### Q1 Is there anything unclear or are there issues that have not been addressed by the guidance document?

- No information has been provided on the proposed APC cap. This makes financial modelling impossible, and those organisations considering a move to an Open Access publishing model cannot gauge the potential financial consequences. An APC cap may also impact upon the quality of service a journal can offer to authors and readers, or may impact on journals' ability to offer a labour-intensive and rigorous peer review process and high standards of quality control.
- Plan S guidance does not consider the impact upon unfunded researchers, or those that are not in receipt of grants that will fund APCs. Not all researchers are in receipt of funding that will support APC charges, even if discounts are available. This creates an immediate barrier to publication for these researchers. This applies across geographies, and affects researchers

in both high-and low-income countries.

- The nature of what constitutes a Plan S-compliant ‘transformative’ agreement that would allow authors to publish in a hybrid journal is currently unclear and lacking definition. Without full clarity on the nature and scope of these agreements journals cannot undertake future planning and initiate the appropriate discussions with publishing partners and stakeholders.
- By prohibiting cOAlition S-funded researchers from publishing in non-compliant journals, Plan S runs the risk of threatening academic freedom. This may impact upon the visibility and reach of these authors’ work amongst their peer group, which may favour non-compliant journals.
- Further clarity on how Plan S funders intend to monitor and sanction non-compliance would be welcome, it is not currently clear how funders should approach this and whether there will be a consistent approach across funders.
- There is no consistent timeline for implementation across funders, this may create confusion and uncertainty.

**Q2 Are there other mechanisms or requirements funders should consider to foster full and immediate Open Access to research outputs?**

- Scholarly organisations, learned societies, non-profit foundations and trusts that undertake publishing activities have not been duly consulted, or considered. These organisations are often charities, dedicated to supporting their academic communities, and their publications are among the most prestigious and influential in their respective fields. Income from publishing helps fund these organisations’ community endeavours, which are critical for the training and mentorship of early career researchers, for the continuing development of established researchers, and indeed, for the health of the discipline itself. The timescale proposed for the implementation of Plan S will not allow those organisations that publish hybrid journals to fully plan and model the financial implications. This represents a threat to the services these organisations offer, which will impact upon researchers at all stages of their careers, and potentially diminish the open exchange of science.
- The global Open Access landscape needs to be considered. Scientific research is a collaborative and international endeavour and restrictions on publication options may threaten academic collaboration.
- The prohibition of non-commercial licences as outlined in Plan S does not take into account preferences across disciplines.