

# Opinion

Letters and comments on RSC activities and issues

## FROM THE EDITOR



I was lucky enough to interview Bill Bryson for a *175 Faces of Chemistry* profile recently. He has long been a friend of the Royal Society of Chemistry, so it was

hugely encouraging to hear the warmth with which he speaks about the work our community does in inspiring future scientists. Read what Bill has to say, along with the equally inspirational and enthusiastic Heston Blumenthal, on p8.

We have consistently argued that if the UK is to continue to produce those future generations of innovative, inspirational chemical scientists, investment in the science budget is crucial. See p10 for an insight into some of the important work our colleagues do in raising our voice to decision makers, as well as an explanation of the complications of how funding works in the UK.

Apart from that, this issue includes a very special anniversary on p19, another of our inspirational *175 faces* on p7, and more ideas for how you can celebrate our anniversary on p6.

Edwin Silvester  
rscnews@rsc.org

RSC News welcomes letters, which should be concise (normally less than 300 words) and timely. Those selected for publication are subject to editing for clarity and length. Letters should be marked 'for publication'; letters are not routinely acknowledged.  
[rscnews@rsc.org](mailto:rscnews@rsc.org)

You can also let us know your thoughts and comments via Twitter or Facebook.



@RSC\_Newsroom



[facebook.com/RoyalSocietyofChemistry](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalSocietyofChemistry)

## Virtuous circles

Converting household and agro processing wastes to useful chemicals is a laudable goal (December, p10), but must be tempered with reality. The case in point is d-Limonene from dried orange peels as an alternative to toluene.

If all the orange peels produced around the world was converted, we will have about half a million tons of d-Limonene.

The global production and consumption of toluene exceeds 30 million tons! The current production of d-Limonene is only 70,000 tons per annum (Chem. Commun., 2014, 50, 15288). Furthermore, there are concerns of health hazards associated with the oxidation products of d-Limonene.

While our anxiety to reduce consumption of fossil resource derived chemicals is genuine, we should also aim to create solutions that are more sustainable and practical. While use of d-Limonene in specialty application may grow, to state that it has the potential to become an alternative to toluene sounds like an overstatement.

**Dr Swaminathan Sivaram**

National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, India

## Virtuous circles and supercritical water

The article by M Smith in the December 2015 issue of *RSC News* noted that the European Commission will very soon present a strategy for a circular economy in the EU.

The RSC should provide input to the development of this plan so that the unrivalled potential of supercritical water alone for the transformation of a variety of essentially useless polymeric organic wastes into more valuable low molecular weight units is emphasized and not overlooked.

**Professor Graham Allan, FRSC**

University of Washington, Seattle, USA

Many thanks for your letters, which raise some very interesting points.

With regard to limonene, we acknowledge that some 'sustainable alternatives' do not in themselves completely address the issue concerned, but often provide a partial solution.

Thank you also for highlighting the potential of supercritical water in the transformation of organic wastes – the technologies employed in moving us into a more sustainable future are an important topic of discussion within our membership and the wider community, and we will continue to foster these discussions at various levels going forward.

**Dr Michael Smith, MRSC**

Cambridge, UK