



## **A Letter from Amanda Feilding, Executive Director of the Beckley Foundation**

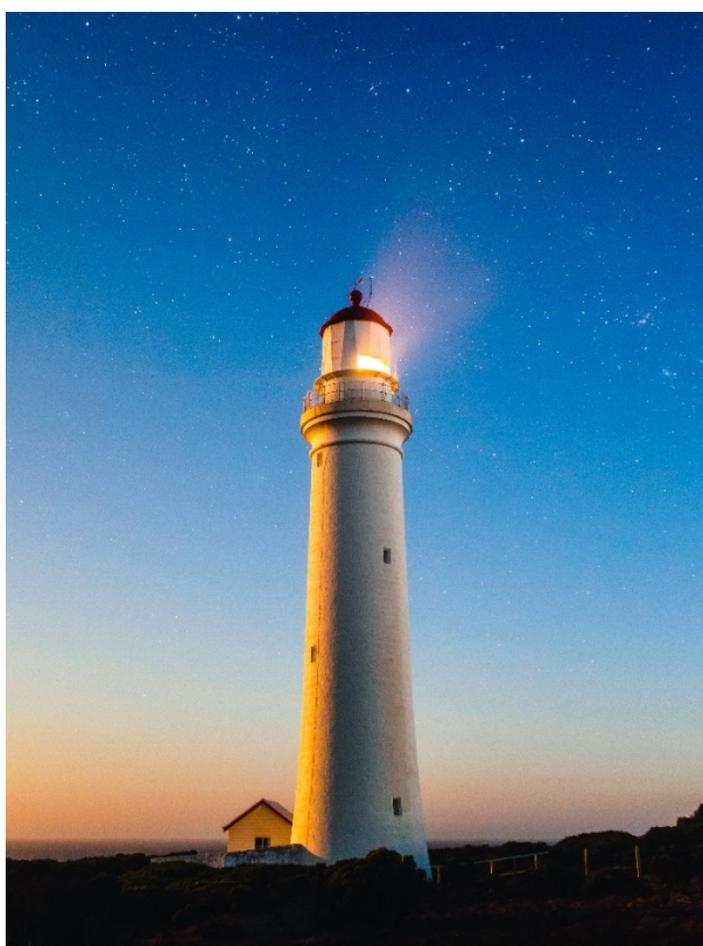
2015 has been a very exciting and busy year for the Beckley Foundation in both policy and science. There has been a seismic shift, in part due to our pioneering work, in the global understanding of *why* and *how* to carefully regulate illicit substances. At the same time, we are making ground-breaking scientific discoveries about the mechanisms and therapeutic potential of these substances, which promise to bring about real change in the treatment of some of our most intractable diseases, while teaching us about consciousness itself.

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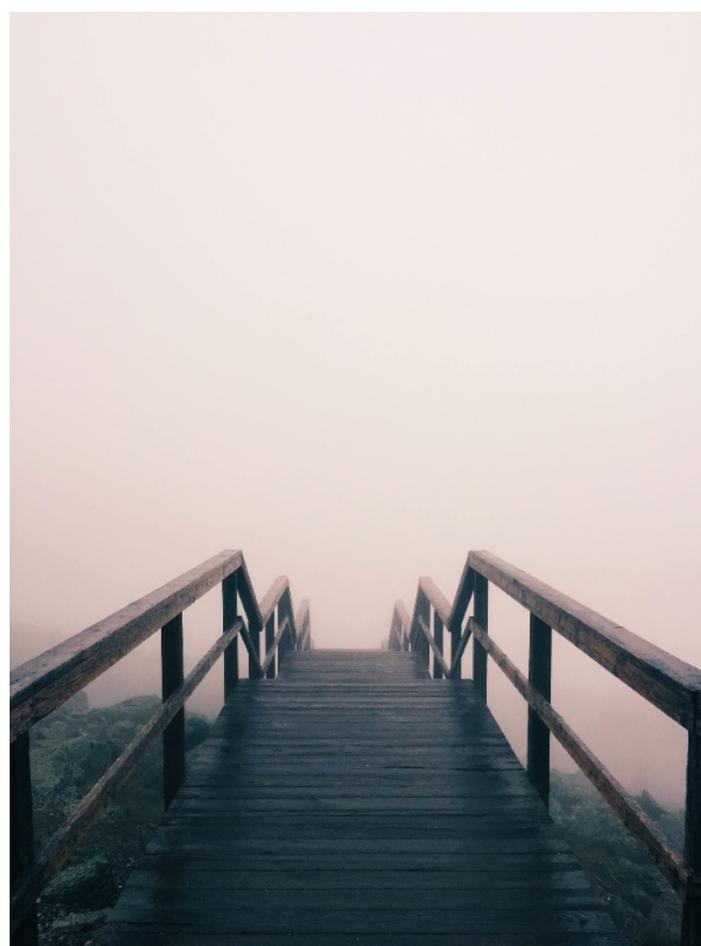


*"History will see her as one of the initiators of this whole movement, and rightly so."  
Robin Carhart-Harris, Principle Investigator of the Beckley/Imperial Science Programme.*

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**Advances in Drug Policy  
Reform**



**Breakthroughs in Scientific  
Discovery**

The Beckley Foundation's efforts are having definite effects on international drug policy, and we now have a key role influencing the formation of balanced policy approaches worldwide. The most recent development is my role as **special advisor to the Jamaican government on the regulation of their new cannabis industry**, following the decision of Parliament to decriminalise cannabis and develop a regulated medicinal market. Senator Mark Golding, the Jamaican Minister of Justice, has invited me to support him and the Jamaican government in building a suitable policy framework, and I am excited to open up new avenues of scientific research there. In November, we co-organised (with the Jamaican Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce) a [successful conference in Negril](#), where local experts and authorities presented their thoughts on the first steps of [Jamaica's cannabis industry](#). The event received immense positive media coverage and highly encouraging feedback, including a call to organise similar events across Jamaica and in Canada.

Also in November, I attended the [International Drug Policy Reform Conference](#) in Washington, where I called for the [regulation of LSD and other psychedelics for recreational use](#). Countries around the world are beginning to decriminalise and regulate cannabis use, yet some of the least harmful and potentially most beneficial psychoactive substances – the psychedelics – remain strictly prohibited and *taboo*. If a person is not in any way damaging anyone else

The Beckley Foundation has made tremendous headway in scientific research on currently ‘controlled’ substances, such as [cannabis](#), [psychedelics](#), and [MDMA](#). I have always believed that a better scientific understanding of these substances is the key to defeating the current, engrained prohibitionist approach to policy and the irrational stigma that accompanies them. I have worked extensively and intensely on opening up research into these substances, and the successes of those efforts are now beginning to bear fruit.

As part of the [Beckley/Imperial Psychedelic Research Programme](#), which has been one of our most successful collaborations since 2005, we completed the first-ever modern neuroimaging study to investigate the **effects of LSD on the human brain**. The findings support an increasingly consistent account of the psychedelic state and its neurobiological basis, and provide more evidence for the importance of the *Default Mode Network* (DMN) as a mechanism underlying the ‘ego’. The LSD study also suggests that visual hallucinations result from the brain’s ‘seeing with eyes shut,’ and explores the interaction between [LSD and the emotional response to music](#). We recently unveiled the first results at ‘[The Beckley Psychedelic Science Seminar](#)’ in London and they were extremely well received. Next steps include a study we designed to investigate the effect of these substances on creativity – a fascinating issue I have been eager to study for a long time.

by their actions, it should be their freedom to choose their preferred state of consciousness.

As part of the Beckley Foundation ***Global Initiative for Drug Policy Reform***, which I launched in 2011, this past year saw the completion of two new ***'Roadmaps to Regulation'*** reports, which I am excited to launch in the coming months. The first report addresses ***Coca, Cocaine, and Derivatives***, and is the most robust attempt to date to broach this vital subject. The second report tackles regulation of ***Cannabis, Psychedelics, MDMA ('Ecstasy'), and Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS)***, and is expected to be both a conversation-starter and a tool for developing more nuanced policies.

In cannabis research, we have already found that high-THC cannabis impairs certain brain networks, while CBD helps counteract some of the negative effects of THC. This research was featured on Channel 4's [\*Drugs Live: Cannabis On Trial\*](#) in March, and was viewed by millions. We are making great strides forward in our collaboration with Prof. Valerie Curran at University College London, where we are using brain imaging to **compare two different strains of cannabis**: one with high THC content and minimal CBD, and the other with a balanced CBD:THC ratio.

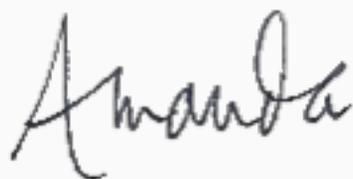
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I hope this news update finds you well, and that I have given a glimpse into the many projects underway at the Beckley Foundation. There is still so much important work to be done, and as a charity, the Beckley Foundation relies entirely on donations to expand our unique work, and appreciate your support.

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*Wishing you all a happy Christmas and a very productive New Year,*



Amanda



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