

PRESS RELEASE - 20 November 2013 for immediate release

Professor Alice Roberts and Professor Iain Stewart Announced as New Patrons for the Natural Science Collections Association

The **Natural Science Collections Association (NatSCA)** – the UK’s professional body for natural science collections and the people that work with them - is delighted to introduce its new patrons, the highly respected scientists **Professor Alice Roberts** and **Professor Iain Stewart**. Both are skilled communicators and strong advocates for the importance and incredible value of natural science collections.

Professor Alice Roberts

"Sometimes I think objects in museum collections are thought of as being only of historical interest. But natural science collections are not only valuable for their history; they also represent a vast source of new information for contemporary researchers. Not only that, but the objects in these collections hold the potential to inspire a new generation of natural scientists. I'm delighted to be a patron of NatSCA."

Alice Roberts is the Professor of Public Engagement in Science at the University of Birmingham. Alice has written four popular science books about anatomy and human evolution. She has presented several science documentaries on the BBC, including *Horizon* episodes, *The Incredible Human Journey*, and *Ice Age Giants*.



Professor Iain Stewart

"Museums are more than mere time capsules - the displays, the specialists, even the buildings, are windows that throw light on how we see and make sense of the world around us. The collections are the keys to unlocking that. Through them we come close to places – and to times – that are otherwise exotic and distant. Dry labelled specimens spill out narratives and tales about scientific discovery that are too easily lost in the formal classroom. Through them, you can genuinely revel in the wonder of Nature and Science."

Iain Stewart is the Professor of Geosciences Communication at Plymouth University. Iain’s main interests lie with geological natural hazards, in particular communicating the effects of these to people who may be affected. He has presented several science documentaries on the BBC, including *Horizon* episodes, *How the Earth Made Us*, and *Rise of the Continents*.

Natural sciences – from dinosaurs, diamonds and dodos to biodiversity, climate change and extinction – are vitally important to our understanding and enjoyment of the world. NatSCA has long worked to improve the way that the specimens behind the museums and research are used, cared for and understood. With Alice and Iain as NatSCA’s first ever patrons, putting a public face and voice to the Association’s stories, the amazing objects and the stories they can tell can become even better understood and appreciated.

For more about NatSCA, visit <http://www.natsca.org>, find us on Twitter [@Nat_SCA](https://twitter.com/Nat_SCA) and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation>

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For further information, images or other requests, email press@natsca.org

To speak to a representative of NatSCA please email press@natsca.org or call **07507595578**.

Notes to the Editor

NatSCA is the subject specialist network for natural science collections in the UK and Ireland. A registered charity (Reg. No. 1098156), we support and act as advocates for natural science collections and the staff that work with them.

The UK holds in the region of 600 natural science collections in museums, universities, schools and research centres in every part of the nation. Some organisations hold many millions of specimens and use cutting edge research techniques to understand major global issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss, others may hold just a few dozen specimens used to inspire children and adults to better appreciate the nature that surrounds them. Natural science collections are essential to our understanding of nature's diversity. They allow research into the changing face of life on Earth over tens, hundreds, thousands and millions of years. They provide a way for us to answer some of the biggest questions in life. Collections have a value to our society and NatSCA is here to help ensure that they are cared for and used in the best ways possible.

NatSCA formed in 2003 so this year sees the 10th anniversary of the organisation. It grew from the merger of the Natural Sciences Conservation Group (NSCG) and the Biological Curator's Group (BGC) which were established in 1995 and 1975 respectively. This means that we have an almost 40 year history of supporting natural science.

Website: <http://www.natsca.org>

Twitter: [@Nat_SCA](https://twitter.com/Nat_SCA)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NaturalSciencesCollectionsAssociation>

Professor Alice Roberts

Website: <http://www.alice-roberts.co.uk>

Twitter: [@DrAliceRoberts](https://twitter.com/DrAliceRoberts)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Alice-Roberts/116907601691195>

Professor Iain Stewart

Websites: <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/staff/istewart>;
<http://web.me.com/iainstewart/activeearth/Welcome.html>

Twitter: [@ProfIainStewart](https://twitter.com/ProfIainStewart)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Iain-Stewart/49834501147>