



**Press Release 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

### **Launch Event for RSE Young Academy of Scotland**

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland's National Academy, will welcome members of the new "RSE Young Academy of Scotland" at a launch event on Tuesday 29th November.

The Young Academy brings together some of the most able and innovative young academics, entrepreneurs, artists and professionals in Scotland. The Academy members will be encouraged to work across disciplines to consider many of the most challenging issues facing society both domestically and internationally, in fields as diverse as climate change, the economy, ethics and the arts.

Professor Alice Brown, the General Secretary of the RSE, who has been involved in selecting the first members of the Young Academy commented, "I am delighted to welcome the many talented young people to the RSE Young Academy. It will be a truly interdisciplinary forum which we hope will harness the ability and knowledge of its members in new and stimulating ways, with a view to addressing the big questions facing society today and in the future. The challenge for all of the members will be to ensure that the voice of the Young Academy is heard and that it has impact and influence in Scotland and beyond."

The launch event, which will be chaired by the journalist Kenneth Roy, will also involve prominent speakers from a range of backgrounds, including the lawyer Shami Chakrabarti (Director of Liberty), Professor Anne Glover (Chief Scientific Adviser to the Scottish Government), and the geneticist Professor Steve Jones (University College London).

Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, said: "The Young Academy is a wonderful way to engage some of Scotland's brightest young talents with each other, wider society and the various challenges of the next few decades.

"It is wonderful to be a guest at the birth of this new initiative. I wish it every success for the future."

Steve Jones added that, "As an Edinburgh graduate I know what a remarkable environment Scotland is for science. Science is all about communication, with other scientists and with the public, and the Young Academy will be a new and welcome forum for such an exchange of views."

The RSE Young Academy is the first such development amongst the National Academies in the UK and will be part of a growing movement of similar bodies around the world. Messages of support have been received from other young academies including the

Global Young Academy for young scientists, the National Academy of Young Scientists in Pakistan, Die Junge Akademie in Germany, the Young Academy of Sweden, and De Jonge Akademie in The Netherlands. It is intended that the RSE Young Academy will develop links with these organisations to promote the cross fertilisation of ideas.

Sir John Arbuthnott, the RSE President also commented: "It is a great pleasure to welcome the first cohort of members to the RSE Young Academy of Scotland. The Young Academy is a unique initiative within the UK and the launch event marks the beginning of what I firmly believe will be an exciting and in time historic initiative."

"It is through the enthusiasm and drive of its members, underpinned by support from the RSE that will mean that the best of Scotland's emerging scholars and professionals will provide a distinctive and influential voice that will be central to the future leadership and vitality of Scottish society."

A rigorous selection procedure resulted in 68 young academics, entrepreneurs and professionals being chosen to be the first members in Scotland. Members were selected from over 330 applicants.

The successful computing scientist and entrepreneur, Professor Chris van der Kuyl, expressed his support for the venture observing, "As a Fellow of the RSE I recognise the important work that it contributes in promoting research, ideas and entrepreneurship for the benefit of Scotland. The advances in knowledge in recent decades have been very fast moving and it is important for the Society to engage with the most talented young people who are active in Scotland today. These are the next generation of leaders in Scotland. I look forward to working with many of the people we are welcoming to the Young Academy."

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**Editors notes:**

**The Royal Society of Edinburgh** is Scotland's National Academy of Science and Letters. It was founded in 1783 by Royal Charter for the "advancement of learning and useful knowledge". It has 1500 Fellows whose expertise encompasses the full spectrum of sciences, medicine, engineering and technology, education, law, the arts, humanities, social sciences, business, industry, the professions and public service. This multi-disciplinary perspective makes the RSE unique amongst the UK's learned societies.

The RSE Young Academy invited applications from outstanding young academics and professionals for membership in the age range late 20s to early 40s. Membership lasts for 3 years and can be continued for a further 3 years.

In the first cohort of members 68 members were appointed from 336 applicants. Of these over 40 % were female; 80% are from the academic sector across a wide range of institutions, with around 20% from the professions and business. Case studies of three of the members are included below and a full list of members is enclosed as an attachment.

The initiative to establish the Young Academy of Scotland was made possible by a legacy donation to the Royal Society of Edinburgh by the late Dr David Shepherd, himself a former Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE).

Profiles of all of the first members of the RSE Young Academy of Scotland are contained in the attached event programme.

*The RSE is Scottish Charity SC000470*