

The Royal Society of Edinburgh

Media Information

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World-renowned Mathematician is new RSE President

One of the world's greatest living mathematicians has become the new President of The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE). Following an election at the RSE, Monday 10 October, Sir Michael Atiyah has taken over as RSE President from Lord Sutherland. New Honorary Office-Bearers were also elected to some of the Society's most senior positions.

Atiyah will be only the second person to have been sometime President of both The Royal Society of Edinburgh and The Royal Society in London – the first being Lord Kelvin. The highly prestigious post of RSE President has been held by other such distinguished figures as Sir James Hall, Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Stevenson. The post is unpaid; the term lasts for three years and always provides a six-month period of overlap for the incoming and outgoing Presidents. In 2004, Sir Michael was joint recipient of the Abel Prize, regarded as the 'Mathematicians' Nobel Prize'.

Outgoing President of The Royal Society of Edinburgh, Lord Sutherland of Houndwood, KT, FBA, PRSE, said:

I am delighted that Sir Michael has been elected to succeed me as President. He is a highly distinguished individual whose wisdom and global perspective will be greatly appreciated by the Society as it further expands its international activities and develops its range of public-benefit activities in Scotland. Sir Michael has a wealth of experience to offer and will be an outstanding leader of, and ambassador for, Scotland's National Academy of Science and Letters.

Sir Michael Atiyah OM, PPRS, HonFRSE said:

I am honoured and delighted to have been elected as President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Lord Sutherland will be a hard act to follow. Under his leadership the RSE has taken many new initiatives and made itself a more visible part of the Scottish community. I will do my best to see that the RSE continues to build on its long and distinguished history and widens its role in the new Scotland.

Honorary Office-Bearers of The Royal Society of Edinburgh:

General Secretary

Professor Gavin McCrone CB

Vice Presidents:

Professor John Coggins

Professor John Mavor

Professor Janet McDonald

Treasurer

Mr Edward Cunningham CBE

Fellowship Secretary

Professor Andrew Walker

Council Members

Professor Ron Asher

Mr Ewan Brown CBE

Professor Tariq Durrani

Professor Rona MacKie CBE

Ms Shonaig Macpherson

Notes for News & Features Editors & Pictures Desks:

1. Biographical Info ~ Sir Michael Atiyah OM, PPRS, HonFRSE

Sir Michael Atiyah has had a profound and beneficial effect on the development of mathematics and science in the UK and Europe. He was one of the pioneers in the development of K-theory. Knighted in 1983, he received the Order of Merit in 1992, was Master of Trinity College Cambridge from 1990 to 1997 and held the position of President of The Royal Society of London from 1990 to 1995. He was elected to Fellowship of The Royal Society of London at the notably young age of 32. Sir Michael was recently President of Pugwash and is Chancellor of the University of Leicester. The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters awarded the Abel Prize, regarded as the 'Mathematicians' Nobel', jointly to Sir Michael and Isadore M. Singer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in 2004. The Abel prize was awarded for "their discovery and proof of the index theorem, bringing together topology, geometry and analysis, and their outstanding role in building new bridges between mathematics and theoretical physics." In 2003 Sir Michael was presented with The Royal Medal by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, in recognition of intellectual endeavour which has had a profound influence on people's lives, world-wide.

The Atiyah-Singer index theorem is one of the great landmarks of twentieth century mathematics, influencing profoundly many of the most important later developments in topology, differential geometry and quantum field theory. The Abel Prize was established by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in 2002 as an international prize for outstanding scientific work in the field of mathematics. This award fills the gap where there is no Nobel Prize for Mathematics. The Prize aims to raise the status of Mathematics in society and stimulate children and young people's interest.

2. Photos

Jpegs of Sir Michael Atiyah and also pictured with Lord Sutherland of Houndwood are available upon request from the RSE.

3. The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) is Scotland's National Academy of Science & Letters. An independent body with charitable status, its multidisciplinary fellowship of 1300 men and women of international standing represents a knowledge resource for the people of Scotland. Committed to its Royal Charter of 1783 for the “advancement of learning and useful knowledge” the Society recognises the important role it can play in today’s Scotland. Working as part of the UK and within a global context, the RSE seeks to contribute to Scotland's social, economic and cultural wellbeing by:

- organising conferences and lectures for the specialist and for the general public on topics of national and international importance
- providing independent, expert advice to key decision makers in Scotland
- awarding over £1.7 million annually to Scotland’s top young academics to promote research in Scotland
- enabling leading Scottish-based researchers to collaborate with the best of their international counterparts
- Inspiring school children in classrooms from the Borders to the Northern Isles and promoting their interest in science, society and culture.
- Producing academic journals of international standing

Full details: www.royalsoced.org.uk

For Media Enquiries, please contact:

Stuart Brown

PR & Communications Manager,

The Royal Society of Edinburgh,

Tel : +44 (0)131 240 5000

mobile :077 11 710 249

Fax +44 (0)131 240 5024; sbrown@royalsoced.org.uk

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