

Press release

Embargoed until 0001hrs, Tuesday 3 March 2020

The RSE names 2020 Fellows

- *64 new fellows announced from across sciences, arts, education, business and public life*
- *Honorary fellowships awarded to actor and activist **Alan Cumming** and historian, **Niall Ferguson***

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (The RSE), Scotland's National Academy has announced its newly elected 2020 Fellows. These new Fellows comprise leading thinkers and experts from Scotland and around the world whose work has a significant impact on our nation.

The new intake of 64 fellows joins the current roll of around 1,600, representing the full range of physical and life sciences, arts, humanities, social sciences, education, professions, industry, business and public life. Those who are nominated, and then invited to join, have undergone rigorous assessment of their achievements, professional standing and societal contribution. Fellows, who give of their time freely, play a fundamental role in enabling the RSE to deliver its mission 'Knowledge Made Useful', contributing to the cultural, economic and social well-being of Scotland and the wider world.

The list includes many leading academics, such as **Professor Francisca Mutapi**, a world-expert on global health and tropical diseases, and **Professor Rosalind Allen**, whose work contributions to our understanding of antibiotic resistance, but also includes a wide array of leaders from the arts, third sector, business and public life. These include **Talat Yaqoob**, a director at Equate Scotland, the national expert in gender equality throughout the STEM sectors, and an Equalities Consultant, who since 2016 has been leading work to change cultures in organisations and academia to encourage more women into male dominated fields.

Talat comments: "It is an honour to be elected as a fellow and have the opportunity to be part of such an esteemed network. I admire the work of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and look forward to playing my role in its aims to engage a diverse range of people, to create a fairer society and to make Scotland a global leader in tackling social and economic challenges."

Alongside the 54 fellows and eight corresponding fellows, honorary fellowships have also been awarded to actor, producer, singer, author and activist **Alan Cumming OBE** and historian **Niall Ferguson**.

In the words of Val McDermid, one of Alan's supporters for Fellowship: "His range is remarkable – as highly respected actor, director, producer, singer, voice artist,

interviewer and writer, his career is both inspirational and aspirational for the young people he supports.

“His work in support of the LGBTQI community has also been of real significance and his own journey is one that provides hope and stokes ambition in young people in difficult situations. He’s a wonderful communicator who engages directly with a broad spectrum of audiences, talking passionately and thoughtfully about his beliefs and experiences.”

In response to his fellowship, Alan commented: “We are at a time in history when more than ever before we need to talk, debate, and conclude. It is such an honour to be asked to join such a great group of thinkers and I am so excited to meet the RSE fellows.”

Professor Dame Anne Glover, President of the RSE concludes: “The diverse expertise and experience of our fellows, means that, as an organisation, we are well-placed to respond to the issues of the day with clear informed thinking free from commercial or political influence. Our new fellows, who we look forward to welcoming, not only hold vast knowledge but also deep experience, keen judgement, boundless enthusiasm and a passion for promoting societal development and change. By using their talents as a collective, we can often unlock or inspire new potential and unearth fresh solutions to some of the most complex issues Scotland’s society faces today.”

Ends

Issued by Clark Communications for The RSE. For further information, contact:
Lesley Brydon: 0131 225 9596 / 07771 630834 / lesley@clarkcommunications.co.uk
Lisa Donnelly: 0141 548 8222 / 07711 476772 / lisa@clarkcommunications.co.uk

Supporting material – all for publication:

- Alan Cumming - image and video (provided on request)
- Talat Yaqoob – image
- RSE Fellows montage image
- Full list of fellows

Notes to Editors

Becoming a fellow of the RSE

All candidates for fellowship must be nominated by an existing fellow, and supported by a further two. Nominations then go through a five-stage selection process, to ensure that those elected are leading lights in their respective fields. The over-riding requirement for selection is excellence, measured against three criteria: outstanding achievement, professional standing and societal contribution. Only when all three are satisfied is a candidate endorsed as a fellow by The RSE.

The RSE, and by association its fellows, delivers its mission by:

- Inspiring and supporting young talent through a wide-ranging programme of research grants and awards

- engaging the public across Scotland on key contemporary issues through its outreach programme RSE@ and a wide-ranging programme of public events
- providing impartial advice and expertise to inform policy and practice through in-depth examination of major issues and providing expert comment on topical matters
- promoting Scotland's interests overseas through building relationships with sister academies across the world and facilitating research collaborations.

The RSE was established in 1783 for “the advancement of learning and useful knowledge”.

New Fellows are following in the footsteps of Benjamin Franklin, Sir Walter Scott, and Professor Charlotte Auerbach, and more recently Professor Peter Higgs, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Sir John Curtice, James MacMillan, Caroline Gardner and Ben Thompson.

www.these.org.uk