



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: 19 July 2019

Appeal aims to save works by Darwin's mentor and inspiration

A campaign to save the notebooks of an influential scientist admired by Charles Darwin has been launched.

The University and more than 800 of its supporters have pledged in excess of £600,000 to help purchase a collection of notebooks by the Scottish geologist Sir Charles Lyell. A further £336,000 is now needed to save them for the nation.

The works, which are currently in private ownership, were subject to a government export bar until 15 July in a bid to keep them in the UK. The strength of the University's campaign means the bar has been extended until 15 October.

Lyell, who died in 1875 aged 77, mentored Darwin after the latter returned from his five-year voyage on the *Beagle* in 1836.

He influenced generations of scientists through his popular books and lectures and is credited with providing the framework that helped Darwin develop his evolutionary theories.

The 294 notebooks contain copies of correspondence between the two scientists.

Darwin wrote: "The science of geology is enormously indebted to Lyell—more so, as I believe, than to any other man who ever lived."

Although written in the Victorian era, the works also shed light on current concerns, including climate change and threats to species diversity.

They also explore the meanings of so-called deep time – the concept of geological time first described by the Scottish geologist James Hutton in the 18th century.

If successful, the University will make the collection freely accessible to the wider public.

High profile institutions and individuals have supported the campaign, including the Geological Society of London and three leading science broadcasters and writers – Nicholas Crane, Hermione Cockburn and Richard Fortey.

Jeremy Upton, the University of Edinburgh Library and Collections Director, said: "The prospect of acquiring and making freely accessible such a fundamentally important archive collection as Sir Charles Lyell's notebooks is a thrilling one."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Professor James A Secord from the University of Cambridge and Director of the Darwin Correspondence Project said: “The notebooks are key to appreciating his standing as arguably the most significant figure in the earth sciences in Britain in the past two centuries.”

For further information, please contact:

Edd McCracken, Press & PR Office, 0131 651 4400; 07557502823;

Edd.McCracken@ed.ac.uk

Ranked among the top universities in the world