

Pre Departure Seminar and JSPS London Anniversary event on November 24th 2014

On 24th November 2014 a morning seminar combining information about JSPS funding opportunities and preparations for a research trip to Japan was organised by JSPS London and hosted at the Natural History Museum London. Participants included recent awardees of JSPS Fellowships to help them prepare for their upcoming research visits to Japan and researchers based at the Natural History Museum interested to learn more about funding from JSPS to do collaborative research in Japan.

The seminar was well attended and started with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Kunio Takeyasu and Dr. Paul Taylor a JSPS Alumni based at the Earth Science Department at the Natural History Museum, whom JSPS London is grateful to for making all the detailed arrangements to accommodate this event. The seminar was presided over by Ms. Polly Watson, International Programme Coordinator of JSPS London, who at first explained the purpose of the event and about the different presentations that were to follow.

The first presentation by Mr. Hideyuki Matsumoto, Deputy Director of JSPS London, gave an essential introduction to JSPS and the largest international programmes at a departmental and institutional level that JSPS administers and UK researchers can be involved with. This was followed by a presentation from Ms. Akiko Fujita, International Programme Associate, who explained about the various individual fellowships UK researchers can apply for, ways to apply and how to find a host researcher in Japan. The final presentation from JSPS London staff was given by Ms. Polly Watson who explained about the types of preparation JSPS fellows should make for their research trip to Japan and the expectations and kinds of assistance available from JSPS. Professor Richard Twitchett, a JSPS Alumnus based at the Natural History Museum, spoke next about his experiences of living and research environments in Japan. He gave very thoughtful and practical advice about getting the most out of a JSPS Fellowship and using the experience to advance his career on return to the UK.

After the morning seminar, a special event was held to celebrate simultaneously the 20th Anniversary of the JSPS London and 10th Anniversary of the UK & ROI JSPS Alumni Association. The event began with remarks from Professor Richard Herrington, Head of Earth Sciences at the Natural History Museum. This was followed by a congratulatory speech from Professor Kunio Takeyasu who remarked on the vast achievements of JSPS London over the past 20 years and Dr. Martyn Kingsbury, Co-Chair of the UK & ROI JSPS Alumni Association praised the association's activities and funding schemes that have enabled its members to form strong and impressive academic links with Japan over the past 10 years. After the group photo and buffet lunch the attendees were invited to join a guided tour of special collections at the Natural History Museum. The attendees either enjoyed a

tour of the Life Science collections which included the spirit collection and Sloane herbarium or a tour of earth science collections which included a visit to the fossil plant, fossil mammal and mineral collection as well as the Conservation Unit. After the tours, Dr. Paul Taylor gave an introduction to research links between the Natural History Museum and institutions in Japan and talked of his own collaborative research on the evolution of bryozoa with Hokkaido University spanning over a decade. The final part of the event was an award ceremony for Alumni granted either a BRIDGE or Symposium Scheme award in FY2014. These awardees received a congratulatory certificate and gift and each gave a short speech about their achievements made with the award.