

Position statement on evolution as a scientific theory

This statement has been prepared in advance of The Manchester Museum's programme of Darwin and evolution-related events that will be taking place in 2009-10.

In science, the word 'theory' means a well supported and tested explanation of available evidence. The theory of evolution states that the diversity of life has developed over time. The Museum's official position is to accept the following as scientific facts:

- Planet Earth, along with the other planets in the Solar System, was formed approximately 4,560 million years ago.
- Life has existed on Earth for thousands of millions of years and has evolved through random genetic changes and natural selection.

These facts are accepted by the overwhelming majority of scientists and are established beyond reasonable doubt as the simplest explanations of the physical and biological evidence.

The theory of evolution is central to the field of biology; the relationship between this scientific theory and religious belief has varied enormously and has sometimes been the cause of confusion and conflict. While The Manchester Museum has taken a definite position on the science of evolution, we support the right of freedom of belief for all and acknowledge that there is a range of perspectives on this subject. During the course of this programme we will be encouraging dialogue, with opportunities to explore ideas related to Darwin and evolution, presenting scientific evidence for evolution and explaining how science works.