

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

PREAS RÁITEAS THAR CEANN ARD-MHÚSAEM NA hÉIREANN

5th March 2012.

Rhinoceros horn in the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History

The National Museum of Ireland has taken the regrettable decision to remove all rhinoceros horn from exhibition. Rhino horn is being poached in the wild at an increasing rate and thieves have stolen horns from exhibits in a number of museums in the last year. This increased risk to specimens on display in the Natural History Museum has been tackled by the removal of trophy heads from exhibition and the removal of horns from the large pieces of taxidermy on open display. These will be replaced by replica horns.

Thieves involved in stealing rhinoceros horns from museums in various parts of Europe have been a threat to visitors and to staff. The National Museum of Ireland regrets that these objects are no longer on view but has taken this decision in light of the security, health and safety risks involved.

Traditional medicine in a number of countries has ascribed properties to rhinoceros horn that have all been denied by modern scientific research. Rhinoceros horns are made of keratin which is the same material forming fingernails and hair in all mammals. Recent suggestions that consumption of powdered rhinoceros horn can be used to battle cancer has increased the desire for this material. Ireland along with most countries is a signatory to CITES, an international attempt to prevent smuggling of products from endangered animals. It is illegal in Ireland to attempt to sell rhinoceros horn or to move it across international boundaries without appropriate permits.

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Notes to the Editor:

Admission to the National Museum of Ireland and its exhibitions is free

- **Open Tuesday – Saturday 10.00am – 5.00pm**
- **Sunday 2.00pm – 5.00pm**
- **www.museum.ie**
- **Museum Shop & Café open**