CLAIMS

1. An expression construct comprising a retinal pigment epithelium (RPE)-specific promoter and an operably linked polynucleotide sequence, wherein the RPE-specific promoter comprises: (a) a sequence of contiguous nucleotides from SEQ ID NO:1 that confers RPE-specific expression on an operably linked polynucleotide sequence, or (b) a sequence having at least 90% sequence identity to said sequence of (a) and that retains RPE-specific promoter activity,

and wherein the operably linked polynucleotide sequence comprises the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

2. The expression construct of claim 1, wherein the RPE-specific promoter comprises: (a) no more than 1300 contiguous nucleotides from SEQ ID NO:1, or (b) at least 90% sequence identity to said sequence of no more than 1300 contiguous nucleotides from SEQ ID NO:1 and retains RPE-specific promoter activity.

3. The expression construct of claim 2, wherein the RPE-specific promoter comprises: (a) no more than 800 contiguous nucleotides from SEQ ID NO:1, or (b) at least 90% sequence identity to said sequence of no more than 800 contiguous nucleotides from SEQ ID NO:1 and retains RPE-specific promoter activity.

4. The expression construct of claim 3, wherein the RPE-specific promoter comprises: (a) the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2 or the sequence of nucleotides 12-761 of SEQ ID NO:2, or (b) at least 90% sequence identity to said sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2, or to nucleotides 12-761 of SEQ ID NO:2, and retains RPE-specific promoter activity.

5. The expression construct of any one of the preceding claims, wherein said sequence of (a) or (b) is at least 500 nucleotides in length.

6. A retinal pigment epithelium (RPE)-specific promotor which comprises: (a) the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2 or the sequence of nucleotides 12-761 of SEQ ID NO:2, or (b) a sequence having at least 90% sequence identity to said sequence of SEQ ID NO:

2, or to nucleotides 12-761 of SEQ ID NO:2, and retains RPE-specific promoter activity

7. An expression construct comprising the promoter of claim 6, operably linked to a sequence to be expressed in an RPE-specific manner.

8. The expression construct according to claim 7, wherein the operably linked sequence is an RPE65, MERTK, LRAT, TYR, GRP143 or MYO7A coding sequence, or a sequence encoding a neurotrophic factor, an anti-angiogenic polypeptide or a polypeptide with anti-apoptotic effects in the RPE.

9. The expression construct according to claim 8 wherein the operably linked sequence comprises a sequence selected from SEQ ID NOs: 3 to 8, or that has at least 80% sequence identity to any one of SEQ ID NOs: 3 to 8 and has the ability to rescue RPE function.

10. A vector comprising an expression construct according to any one of claims 1 to 5 or 7 to 9, or the promotor accordingly to claim 69.

11. The vector according to claim 10, wherein the vector is a viral vector.

12. The vector according 11, wherein the vector is an adeno-associated virus (AAV) vector or comprises an AAV genome or a derivative thereof, optionally wherein said derivative is a chimeric, shuffled or capsid modified derivative.

13. The vector according to claim 12, wherein said AAV genome is from a naturally derived serotype or isolate or clade of AAV, optionally wherein said AAV genome is from AAV serotype 2 (AAV2), AAV serotype 4 (AAV4), AAV serotype 5 (AAV5) or AAV serotype 8 (AAV8) and/or wherein the capsid is derived from AAV5 or AAV8..

14. The vector according to claim 13, wherein the AAV genome is derived from AAV2 and the capsid is derived from AAV5 or AAV8.

15. A host cell that contains a vector of claim 10 or produces a viral vector of any one of claims 11 to 14, optionally wherein the host cell is a HEK293 or HEK293T cell.

16. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a vector of any one of claims 10 to 14 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

17. The vector according to any one of claims 10 to 14 for use in a method of preventing or treating retinal dystrophy.

18. Use of a vector according to any one of claims 10 to 14 in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of retinal dystrophy.

19. A vector for use according to claim 17, or a use of claim 18 , wherein the retinal dystrophy is Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA), age-related macular degeneration (AMD), oculo-cutaneous type 1 or Nettleship-Falls type ocular albinism or MERTK deficiency.

20. A vector for use according to claim 17 or 19, or a use of claim 18 or 19, wherein the treatment or prevention is by administration of the vector according to any one of claims 10 to 14 to a patient by direct retinal, subretinal or intravitreal injection, optionally wherein said vector is administered directly into the retinal, subretinal space or intravitreal space.