

# Geoscience Vital to Our Society Now More Than Ever - Dempsey

## Launch of €43 Million National Geoscience Programme (2007-2013) and New Griffith Geoscience Research Awards Scheme

Dublin, 21st February 2007

Noel Dempsey TD, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources this evening launched a new National Geoscience Programme for Ireland. The programme, a collaborative effort by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), provides for a total investment of some €43 million over seven years in the geoscience sector.

Speaking at the launch in the Academy, Minister Dempsey said; "This programme has been crafted to enhance many aspects of Irish life, including the sustainable management of our environment, the development of our natural resources and infrastructure, and understanding and predicting natural hazards."

The Awards Scheme and the Geoscience Programme will both operate on an all-island basis. Speaking at the launch, President of the RIA, Dr. Jim Slevin said, "Geological parameters do not recognise political borders so this strategy has been explicitly created in an inclusive "All-Island" context."

Noting that 2008 has been designated by the UN as International Year of Planet Earth, Minister Dempsey urged the geoscience sector to avail of this opportunity to show its importance to the wider public.

At the launch, Minister Dempsey also announced the launch of a €10 million research initiative, "*The Griffith Geoscience Research Awards Scheme*." This award scheme named to honour Richard Griffith, the celebrated geologist and engineer, who lived from 1784 to 1878, will boost research in the geoscience area, targeting the vital pillars of energy, environment, marine and infrastructure.

The Griffith Awards follow on the successful Charles Parsons Energy Research awards launched in 2006 and the Marine Research Awards announced last week. The 3 Award schemes are based

on the provision of 7 year research funding and 7 year Researcher contracts. “This commitment to early stage researcher career development demonstrates the importance with which I and my Department view the contribution of researchers. I am convinced that the 7 year funding mechanism, which is the first such funding approach across the EU, will be significant in attracting young International mobile researchers to Ireland.”

A key Griffith award will be awarded to a competent research group who will work with the GSI in digitalising and web enabling their data bases. “This will allow open access, without charge, to these data bases and so optimise the use of the data for productive purposes.”

Another Griffith award will fund the development of an All Island Graduate school in Geoscience where PhD students will have access to modules related to Energy, Environment, Marine, Transport and Infrastructural Development.

“The Programme announced today is a highly ambitious one that sets out a clear vision for how the geoscience sector will evolve over 2007-2013. By driving a strongly focused knowledge and research agenda, the Programme will improve our understanding of how our planet works and highlight the often unseen importance of geoscience in our daily lives,” concluded Minister Dempsey.

**Notes to Editors:**

Photographs of this event will be available from Fennell Photography. Email: [info@Fennell-photography.ie](mailto:info@Fennell-photography.ie) or contact [353] 1 668 9766.

Geoscience-based industry contributes more than €2 billion each year to the Irish economy. This figure is comprised of mining operations, aggregates, plasterboards and other materials for the construction industry, gas production and various high-level consultancy services, mostly carried out by highly skilled graduates of Irish science universities.

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