

“Ireland to become leaders in Earth Science research and education”

Dublin, 5th July 2007

The Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources Eamon Ryan T.D., today awarded more than €9.1 Million of Government grants to 9 groups from Irish universities and research organisations, north and south, to fund priority research in Geosciences.

The awards, named in honour of **Richard Griffith (1784-1878)** the celebrated geologist, are an approach unique across the European Union designed to encourage and develop world-class geoscience research and educational activities in Ireland. The research activities will specifically target the pillars of energy, environment, marine and infrastructure.

Commenting at a ceremony to mark the awarding of grants to the successful applicants Minister Ryan noted that, *"Though geoscience is often an area that operates under the radar of the public at large, the sector in fact contributes more than €2 billion each year to our economy. Geosciences hold the vital key to the sustainable management of our environment, the development of our natural resources and infrastructure, and understanding and predicting natural hazards."*

"Some of the exciting new projects that we will be funding from today will undertake research that could potentially transform our lives. One group will explore the potential for generating geothermal energy from sources deep in the Earth's crust, another group will evaluate the impact of climate change and human behaviour upon our groundwater supplies. Yet another will work to share data from the Geological Survey of Ireland via the internet", continued the Minister.

The Griffith Awards are a key component of the National Geoscience Programme 2007 - 2013, published earlier this year which sets out the vision for how the geoscience sector will evolve over the next 7 years on the island of Ireland.

"I believe we can make Ireland an internationally renowned destination for geoscience research. The Government has committed to investing a total of €43 million over the next seven years in the geoscience sector and with 2008 designated by the UN as the International Year of Planet Earth there is no better time to build our geoscience research capacity," concluded Minister Ryan.

A total of 29 applications for funding were received under the Griffith Awards Scheme. The applications were evaluated with the assistance of an international peer review panel and the following applicants were successful:

- €3.1 million - Biogeoscience Research Group, National University of Ireland Galway
- €1.8 million - Groundwater Research Group, Queen's University Belfast
- €1.5 million - Marine and Petroleum Geology Research Group, University College Dublin
- €852,000 - Coastal & Marine Research Centre, University College Cork.
- €640,000 - Geophysics Research Group, University College Dublin
- €521,000 - Geophysics Research Group, University of Ulster Coleraine
- €407,000 - Irish Geoscience Graduate Programme, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
- €120,000 - Geoschool Group, Trinity College Dublin
- €100,000 - TV series "Planet Earth", Holocene Ltd

**The awards cover important priority themes for geoscience in:
Carbon storage and related energy sources in deep Earth;
Modelling Groundwater supplies and their environmental interactions;
The environment and hazards of the seabed;
Facilitating the web delivery of geoscience information.**

They also include support for an Irish Geoscience Graduate Programme and outreach activities by geological and natural history museums.

Further details available from

Geological Society of Ireland
www.gsi.ie