



PRESS RELEASE

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GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS LAUNCHED IN BORDER COUNTIES

- **Relevance and Benefits of “Tellus Border” Unveiled by Minister Pat Rabbitte and Project Partners**
- **Local Communities Urged to Support Important Project**

The first phase of a groundbreaking geological project which will provide vitally important data to help sustain and manage Ireland’s natural resources now, and into the future, was launched today (Mon 4 July) in Cavan by Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Pat Rabbitte.

Details of the survey phase of the €5m EU-funded Tellus Border Project were unveiled to over 100 cross-border delegates including those from the six border counties – Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth – by the project’s lead partners, the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland.

The Tellus Border surveys will include airborne data collection along with on-the-ground soil and water sampling. They will start this summer and will be phased throughout the next two years. The resulting data on the soils, rocks and waters of the region will bring widespread cross-border benefits to many sectors including those responsible for environmental and earth resource management, planning and mineral exploration.

Tellus Border also extends the analysis and application of existing data resulting from the original and highly successful Tellus Project, which ran from 2004-2007 throughout Northern Ireland. This will ensure the continued delivery of benefits to the region.

Launching the Tellus Border Surveys, Minister Rabbitte said:

“Following the project’s official launch earlier this year, I’m delighted to now announce the commencement of the survey work across the border counties of Ireland. This is a highly significant project, conducted by world class experts in this field, which will provide crucial baseline information to ensure the sustainable use of Ireland’s natural resources.”

Dr. Patrick O’Connor, Director of the Geological Survey of Ireland welcomed guests to the event and commented, **“This is a very exciting stage in the project as the teams commence the geophysical and geochemical surveys, collecting data which will undoubtedly benefit the environment and economies north and south of the border, both now and into the future. This project is an important reminder of just how important our natural resources are and how we can’t afford to take them for granted.”**

Mike Young, Director of the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland and Project Manager for Tellus Border said, **“Over the next year or so, the Tellus Border team will be visibly working across the rural areas of the six border counties so it is extremely important that the people living and**



working here are aware of the project and appreciate its value. We have been extremely pleased with the reception across the region to date and through open, two-way communication we hope to sustain and build on this support as the project progresses.”

The cross-border Tellus Border project has been funded by the INTERREG IVA development programme of the European Regional Development Fund, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). This is the largest of the latest awards under the Environment theme of INTERREG IVA and is part funded by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Northern Ireland’s Department of the Environment

Welcoming the launch of the Surveys Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the SEUPB, said: **“This is a very worthwhile project and one that I’m glad the SEUPB has been able to support in line with the objectives of the INTERREG IVA Programme. The surveys now being launched have the potential to inform future planning in the use and management of natural resources on a cross-border basis. Co-operation in the management of joint resources with a view to promote a more sustainable economic development and minimising its impact on the environment is one of the priorities that the INTERREG cross-border programme seeks to support. The Tellus Border project, which is building on the achievements of another previously funded project focused on the counties in Northern Ireland, will make an important contribution to furthering that co-operation.”**

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. SEUPB

The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Finance in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU structural funds Programmes PEACE III and INTERREG IV designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

The INTERREG IVA 2007-2013 Programme, funded through the European Regional Development Fund, is worth €256 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It has two distinct priority measures to create co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu

2. Partner Responsibilities

Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) - www.bgs.ac.uk/gsni/

- Project management



- Airborne geophysical survey of approx 65% of the land area and inland waters of parts of Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan.

Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) – www.gsi.ie

- Communications management
- Data management
- Geochemical soils and streams survey of the above six counties of RoI.

GSNI/GSI

- Integration of new RoI data with Tellus data; cross-border analysis and interpretation.

The project also has two academic partners who will deliver research studies:

Queen’s University Belfast - www.qub.ie

- Characterisation and quantification of carbon in soil (post-doc).
- Detection, mapping and characterisation of pollution plumes (post-doc).

Dundalk Institute of Technology – www.dkit.ie

- Hydrology and hydrogeology of wetlands of the border area (post-doc).

3. Project background

Tellus Border is the latest phase of a project originally conceived by GSNI, GSI and the British Geological Survey in the late 1990s as ‘The Resource and Environmental Survey of Ireland’ (RESI). This was intended to be a comprehensive and integrated geophysical and geochemical survey of the whole island of Ireland, with the objective of providing state-of-the-art geo-science information to inform government development decisions.

The first phase of RESI, the Tellus Project, comprised geoscience surveys of Northern Ireland completed between 2004 and 2007. The project was co-funded by DETI, DoE, and the EU’s ‘Building Sustainable Prosperity’ fund of the Rural Development Programme of DARD. These surveys comprised detailed geochemical surveys and a low-level airborne geophysical survey of the whole of Northern Ireland. The results have been used widely by government and industry for environmental management and the value of the project was acknowledged by national awards for GIS, mineral exploration promotion, and public relations.

The second phase of the programme in Northern Ireland, ‘Tellus2’, was funded between 2008 and 2011 by the Chancellor’s Fund for Innovation; this phase extended data analysis and promoted the use of the data widely amongst the research community. Today, 10 PhDs based on Tellus data are in progress in UK and Ireland.

Objectives for Tellus2 were set out in the Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland Action Plan, 2008-11. These include Action 3.1.3: ‘Collaborate with government and industrial partners in the RoI in extending the Tellus project into the RoI’. Accordingly, in July 2009 GSNI assembled a cross-border partnership to apply for funding under the Environment theme of INTERREG IVA. The submission proposed geochemical and airborne geophysical surveys of the six northern counties of



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RoI, continued analysis and application of existing Tellus data in NI, and three complementary research projects in wetlands, soil carbon, and detection of pollution plumes. The application was successful and SEUPB awarded a grant of £4,014,609 for a project to run from 1 November 2011 to 31 December 2013.

4. For media enquiries please contact Kelly McKee/Claire Bonner at Morrow Communications on 02890 393837