

## Science Foundation Ireland Press Release

### Minister Bruton announces new AbbVie and Science Foundation Ireland investment of €10 million in two new research collaborations

**Dublin 21st November 2015** – Today at the Global Irish Economic Forum in Dublin Castle, Minister for Jobs Mr Richard Bruton announced a joint investment of €10 million by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation through Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in a partnership with leading international biopharmaceutical company AbbVie to undertake two new therapeutic research collaborations in Ireland. The collaborations, which will each investigate disease markers and potential targets against which new drugs could be developed for serious illnesses such as Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and multiple sclerosis, are between AbbVie and researchers at the SFI APC Microbiome Institute in University College Cork (UCC) and at the Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute in Trinity College Dublin.

Announcing the investment, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Mr Richard Bruton, T.D, said: *"At the heart of our jobs plan is supporting more investment by both industry and the public sector in scientific research. Today's announcement that my Department, through SFI, and AbbVie, a world-leading company in this area, are collaborating to invest €10million in ground-breaking research is a great example of what we are trying to achieve. This clearly demonstrates the importance and value of Government supporting high quality researchers in our academic institutes which enables them to partner with multinational companies to undertake research in Ireland. I wish Jim and his team every success and look forward to working with them in the future."*

*"I welcome the establishment of these two new research collaborations by AbbVie. AbbVie is a world-leading biopharmaceutical company and this builds on considerable investments made by AbbVie in Ireland earlier this year."*

Jim Sullivan, Ph.D., Vice President, Pharmaceutical Discovery, AbbVie, said: *"AbbVie has a long history in Ireland and the country has contributed greatly to our global success. We are impressed with the high quality immunology research ongoing across academia in Ireland. Partnering with the leading researchers in autoimmune disease will foster continued innovation in one of our most important therapeutic areas. We hope to unlock the potential for significant advancements for patients with serious autoimmune disease."*

In Cork, AbbVie will collaborate with researchers at the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre, the APC Microbiome Institute in UCC led by Prof Fergus Shanahan on identifying possible new treatments for patients with Crohn's disease. The research will be supported by an investment of €7.5 million from SFI together with AbbVie over five years and will support 11 new research positions at the APC.

Prof Fergus Shanahan, Director of the APC Microbiome Institute, said, *"This AbbVie and APC venture is a wonderful match, blending industry and academe with complementary technology and expertise."*

The second project will involve collaboration with researchers led by Prof Kingston Mills, at the Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute in Trinity, working on biomarkers and drug targets for autoimmune and other immune-mediated diseases. This research will be funded by €2.5million from SFI and AbbVie over the next three years and will support four new research positions.

Prof Kingston Mills, Professor of Experimental Immunology, School of Biochemistry and Immunology, Trinity College Dublin, said, *"Inflammation is a vital process in fighting infection, however, if uncontrolled, it can contribute to the development of autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, Crohn's disease and multiple sclerosis. This collaborative research project with AbbVie, a major biopharmaceutical company, will focus on identifying and building our understanding of the cellular and molecular mechanisms that cause inflammation to assist in developing new disease markers and drug targets for the treatment of a range of inflammatory diseases."*

Commenting on the announcement, Prof Mark Ferguson, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government of Ireland said, *"Autoimmune diseases like Crohn's are common (affect 5% of the global population, two thirds of them female) and debilitating. To develop new treatments we need to better understand the underlying mechanisms which is the focus of these research collaborations. By partnering our leading researchers with those in a major pharmaceutical company like AbbVie we can hopefully accelerate the discovery of new knowledge which will lead to improved treatments and outcomes for patients. We are delighted that AbbVie - a global company - choose to partner with Irish researchers – this is a positive reflection of the quality and relevance of Irish scientific research – excellence and impact."*

**Ends**

**For further information:**

**Science Foundation Ireland**

Niamh Bradley or Alva O'Cleirigh

086 0271744 or 087 915 2553

[Niamh.bradley@sfi.ie](mailto:Niamh.bradley@sfi.ie) or [Alva.OCleirigh@sfi.ie](mailto:Alva.OCleirigh@sfi.ie)