

**Tánaiste Coughlan Launches €75m Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund  
managed by NCB**

**5th Fund Under Enterprise Ireland's Seed and Venture Capital Scheme  
2007-2012 Announced**

**Wednesday 8th October 2008:** The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, Mary Coughlan T.D., today announced the first closing of the Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund Limited Partnership - a new €75m fund to be managed by NCB Ventures, the venture capital arm of NCB Group.

The fund is the fifth new fund supported by Government through Enterprise Ireland's €175m Seed and Venture Capital Programme 2007-2012.

The Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund Limited Partnership will invest in companies at early and expansion stages of development across a broad range of industrial sectors. The first closing of €75m exceeded expectations and further investments will be accepted up to a final closing of €100m.

Making the announcement the Minister said:

"I am delighted to announce the creation of the €75m Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund which represents the third fund collaboration between Enterprise Ireland, Ulster Bank, Diageo and NCB in the past 10 years.

"This fund significantly increases the availability of capital for companies seeking to expand and internationalise their businesses and marks a vital contribution to the ongoing development of the venture capital sector in Ireland. I would like to congratulate NCB on their success in attracting such a broad range of investors spanning the public and private sectors and, working in close co-operation with Enterprise Ireland and the other investors, making this new Fund a reality."

Investors in the Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund Limited Partnership comprise a unique combination of corporates, financial institutions, pension funds, private investors and State agencies including Enterprise Ireland, Ulster Bank, Diageo Ireland, the National Pensions Reserve Fund, NCB and private clients of NCB. The geographical focus will be the island of Ireland and investments will range from €0.5m to €5m per company.

Conor O'Kelly, Chief Executive Officer of NCB Group said:

"We are very pleased with the level and quality of investor participation in this Fund. The high level of commitments achieved is a strong vote of confidence from public and private sectors in the future growth potential of Irish businesses, notwithstanding the current challenging economic environment."

Robert Gallagher, Chief Executive Ulster Bank Corporate Markets, said:

"Ulster Bank's investment in this new fund demonstrates our continuing commitment to support entrepreneurial business ventures in Ireland that require equity capital to grow and expand.

"The investment strategy of the Ulster Bank Diageo Venture Fund is aligned with the Bank's overall commitment to provide a range of funding and other supports to businesses operating at various stages of development. We are particularly pleased that this fund will target investee companies spread across the island of Ireland."

Michael Murphy, Managing Partner of NCB Ventures added: "The availability of new funds for investment in early and expansion stage companies is vital if we are to continue to encourage and promote entrepreneurship. Given the shortage of liquidity in financial markets it is an opportune time to back innovative entrepreneurs in small and medium sized businesses that offer competitive advantage in an increasingly global marketplace."

**--ENDS--**

**For further information contact:**

Eileen Banks, Press Officer, Enterprise Ireland  
01 7272085/ 087 2445814

**Enterprise Ireland's Seed and Venture Capital Programme 2007-2012**

Venture capital is an essential element of the eco-system for Irish indigenous industry, providing risk capital for companies that would have difficulty raising capital through traditional sources of finance.

Under the 2007-2012 Seed and Venture Capital Programme, the Government through Enterprise Ireland is investing €175m, which will leverage an estimated investment of €1bn in start-up, early stage and development stage businesses. This scheme was announced in May 2006 and follows two previous similar programmes. Under the 1994-1999 Programme, Enterprise Ireland committed €43.9m, which leveraged a total €127m for investment. Under the 2000-2006 programme Enterprise Ireland committed €98m, which resulted in a total €408m for investment.

**Enterprise Ireland**

Enterprise Ireland is the government agency responsible for the development and promotion of the indigenous business sector. EI provides financial support to companies by way of direct investments in individual projects as well as indirect investments through participating in venture capital funds.

**NCB & NCB Ventures**

NCB is one of Ireland's largest independent securities firms specialising in institutional equities, wealth management, corporate finance and venture capital. With offices in Dublin and London, NCB's clients comprise major institutional investors based in Ireland and abroad, leading publicly-quoted and private companies in Ireland and the UK and high net worth private clients.

NCB Ventures, the manager of the fund, is the venture capital arm of NCB and has €94 million under management. NCB Ventures has invested in 25 early and expansion stage companies including AMCS, Allegro Technologies, Biotrin, Cellix, Macalla Software, Magnetic Solutions, KCC, Jackie Skelly, National

Linen, Newcourt Group, Phonecard Warehouse and ValidSoft. NCB's investment team comprises Michael Murphy, Leo Hamill, Will Prendergast, Nicky Fitzgerald and Derek Crawley.

### **Ulster Bank**

Ulster Bank provides retail and corporate banking services to customers throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ulster Bank Retail Markets provides Branch Banking and Direct Banking for personal and small business customers, while Ulster Bank Corporate Markets caters for the banking needs of business and corporate customers, treasury and money market activities, asset financing, wealth management, ebanking and international services.

### **Diageo Ireland**

Diageo Plc is the world's leading premium drinks business. Diageo trades in some 180 countries around the world and is listed on both the New York Stock Exchange (DEO) and the London Stock Exchange (DGE). Diageo has significant operations in Ireland with roots going back almost 300 years to the establishment of Smithwicks's in Kilkenny in 1710 and Guinness at St. James's Gate in 1759. Diageo operations have been at the forefront of Irish business success and one of Ireland's most important exporters in the high value-added food and beverage sectors. Diageo's operations in Ireland bring the iconic brands, Guinness, Bushmills and Bailey's Original Irish Cream, to consumers in Ireland and over 150 countries across the world.

### **National Pensions Reserve Fund**

The National Pensions Reserve Fund was established by the Government in 2001 to meet as much as possible the costs of Ireland's social welfare and public service pensions from 2025 until at least 2055. The Fund is controlled by the NPRF Commission, which has a statutory commercial investment mandate, and is invested globally across a diversified range of asset classes including quoted equities, bonds, property, private equity and commodities. The National Treasury Management Agency is the Manager of the Fund.