

Scottish First Minister Rt. Hon Alex Salmond MSP has welcomed today's news that a major new pharmaceutical drug discovery initiative is to be centred at BioCity Scotland in Lanarkshire, in partnership with the University of Dundee. The project will bring at least €19 million (£16.3 million) of research funding to Scotland following today's announcement by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) of the launch of the European Lead factory.

In addition to the €19 million (£16.3 million) of IMI funding, further financial support for the Scottish-based project worth £3.5 million will come from the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government. In partnership with the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA), the University of Dundee will place a team of drug discovery scientists at Biocity Scotland to conduct screening and medicinal chemistry activities for the project.

Accelerating the development of a new generation of drugs is behind the announcement by an international consortium of 30 partners taking part in the European Lead Factory, a novel platform for innovative drug discovery. This partnership, the first of its kind, is supported by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), and creates unprecedented opportunities for the discovery of new medicines through access to a proprietary, high-quality compound collection based at BioCity Scotland. The University of Dundee and Biocity Scotland are joined by the University of Oxford to form the UK half of the European Screening Centre in collaboration with the other partners in Holland.

Pharmaceutical companies have vast libraries of compounds held in safeguarded corporate chemical collections, which can be screened in the hunt for potential medicines. Usually, access to these compound libraries is highly restricted. However, as part of the European Lead Factory, the 7 participating pharmaceutical companies will contribute a total of 300,000 chemical compounds from their collections. A library of an estimated additional 200,000 novel compounds will be developed jointly by academia including the Universities of Nottingham and Leeds, and by small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Together, the two libraries will form a Joint European Compound Collection consisting of up to half a million compounds that will be accessible to all project partners and to any European organisations offering promising new targets for drug discovery screening. These target proposals will be selected through competitive calls.

An equally important part of the European Lead Factory is the European Screening Centre, which will assist contributors of novel targets in the development of tests amenable to the requirements of industrialized screening methodology. Both the sites in Scotland and in the Netherlands will run state of the art facilities for compound logistics high throughput screening to respectively handle the 500,000-strong compound library and to evaluate new compounds that are active against the novel targets.

The contract to run the European Screening Centre was awarded against stiff European competition and was strongly supported by the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA), the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, and global pharmaceutical company Life Technologies. The work to manage the compounds storage, handle some of the screening and coordinate the programme will be shared between BioCity Scotland, the University of Dundee, Pivot Park in Oss (Netherlands), the University of Oxford and TI Pharma.

Speaking as the announcement was made at his official residence in Edinburgh this morning, First Minister Alex Salmond said:

"Congratulations to BioCity Scotland and to SULSA on bringing such a huge and valuable piece of work to Scotland. This provides enormous opportunities for Scotland's life sciences sector and it is fantastic recognition of the talent and expertise of Scotland's life sciences community.

"In particular, this shows the combined strength of our universities and commercial experts. Working together, they have been able to secure the biggest ever IMI contract of its kind for Scotland, putting Lanarkshire and Dundee at the forefront of drug discovery in Europe for many years to come.

"This morning's announcement reinforces Scotland's international reputation as a nation at the forefront of scientific breakthroughs and promotes the life sciences sector as central to continued economic growth in Scotland."

Professor Andrew Hopkins of the University of Dundee, and SULSA Director said: "We are absolutely delighted that the European Lead Factory will be co-located in Scotland with BioCity Scotland providing compound logistics and the University of Dundee staff at the site, undertaking screening activities and medicinal chemistry for the project. The addition of the European Lead Factory to the Scottish Life Sciences community seals our growing international reputation as one of the most dynamic and innovative hubs for academic drug discovery. We will use the opportunity provided by the IMI project as a spring-board to win further investments in the field of drug discovery innovation to benefit not only academic research but also to deliver wider economic and societal value for Scotland."

Speaking on behalf of the European Screening Centre team, Dr Glenn Crocker CEO BioCity Group said: "For me, the exciting aspect of this project is the opportunity it provides to discover novel drugs through the collaboration of seven large pharma companies and an open call to academics and industry across Europe. On top of that there is the potential to build on this platform, extending it into new screening technologies or wider compound collections. We are very pleased it will be based at BioCity Scotland."

IMI Executive Director Michel Goldman said: “IMI is very excited by the launch of the European Lead Factory. This unique project is an excellent example of how a public-private partnership can transform the way in which the pharmaceutical sector identifies new medicines. For the first time, it will give European researchers unprecedented access to industry chemical collections and facilitate the translation of their findings into actual treatments for patients. This project will not only advance the chances of success in the discovery of new medicines by European researchers, but also add value by building research capacity in Europe.”

Find out what others are saying about the ELF here: <http://www.sulsa.ac.uk/ELF/launch>

The total budget for the European Lead Factory amounts to €196 million. Of this €80 million comes from the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7), and €91 million is provided as in-kind contributions from the participating companies that are members of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). The remaining €25 million comes from other contributions from the non-EFPIA participants.

Bayer HealthCare will be the coordinator from the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) for this IMI project. The Netherlands based non-profit organization TI Pharma will facilitate the overall scientific governance of this new project and is heading the European Consortium’s Screening efforts. Taros Chemicals is heading the European consortium’s Chemistry effort.

If the project proves successful during its initial five year funding period, the European Screening Centre and the teams of SMEs and academic institutions aim for a sustainable role in drug discovery and the future growth of drug discovery in Europe.

## **ENDS**

Dr Glenn Crocker and Professor Andrew Hopkins are available for interview.  
Photography is available from Thursday 7th February at 12 noon

Press contacts

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## Notes to Editors

Copies of all media documents, including those issued by IMI, are available from Integra Communications

Most documents and the full story are available here: <http://www.sulsa.ac.uk/ELF/overview>

The research leading to these results has received support from the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking under grant agreement n° 115489, resources of which are composed of financial contribution from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) and EFPIA companies' in kind contribution.'

More information: <http://www.imi.europa.eu/content/european-lead-factory>

## UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE - LIFE SCIENCES

With more than 1000 scientists, research students and support staff from 64 countries and external funding averaging in excess of £40 million per year, the College of Life Sciences at the University of Dundee is one of the largest and most productive Life Sciences research institutes in Europe. Consistently voted one of 'the best places for a life scientist to work' by The Scientist magazine, the College has an international reputation for its basic and translational research and was recognised in the 2011 Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council Excellence with Impact Awards for 'Greatest Delivery of Impact'. The University of Dundee is the central hub for a multi-million pound biotechnology sector in the east of Scotland, which now accounts for 16% of the local economy.

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk>

## BIOCITY SCOTLAND

A joint venture between BioCity Nottingham and Roslin BioCentre, BioCity Scotland is much more than a property proposition; it is a state-of-the-art bioscience and healthcare facility, located right in the heart of the Central Belt of Scotland.

In addition to over 130,000 sq ft of 'pharma quality' fully fitted laboratory and office space, BioCity Scotland provides access to a wide range of state-of-the-art equipment, available to rent at very competitive rates.

Housing a unique community of commercially minded, dynamic young scientific companies, BioCity Scotland has networking, collaborating and sharing ideas at the heart of its aims.

<http://www.biocity-scotland.co.uk>

Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA)

Established in 2007, Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA) is a research pooling partnership between the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Strathclyde that is supported by the Scottish Funding Council.

SULSA aims to maintain and advance Scotland's global position in the Life Sciences by recruiting international research leaders and funding world-class research facilities. SULSA also connects researchers across Scotland through events and collaborative PhD studentships.

<http://www.sulsa.ac.uk>

INNOVATIVE MEDICINES INITIATIVE

The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) is the world's largest public-private partnership in health. IMI is improving the environment for pharmaceutical innovation in Europe by engaging and supporting networks of industrial and academic experts in collaborative research projects. The European Union contributes €1 billion to the IMI research programme, and this is matched by in kind contributions worth at least another €1 billion from the member companies of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).

The Innovative Medicines Initiative currently supports 38 projects, many of which are already producing impressive results. The projects all address major bottlenecks which will accelerate the development of safer and more effective treatments for patients.

More info on IMI: <http://www.imi.europa.eu>