

# Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences

21 February 2023 17.45 – 19.30

Minute

Present

MSPs

Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise  
Kenneth Gibson MSP  
Graham Simpson MSP  
Michael Marra MSP

Invited guests

Dr Paul Burton, Chief Medical Officer, Moderna  
Mark Cook, Chair, Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group

Non-MSP Group Members

Alison Culpan, ABPI  
Andrew Tobin, Glasgow University  
Helen Reilly, ABPI  
Claire Headspeath, ABPI  
Dr Aida Cardona-Alberich, Edinburgh University  
Calum Smith, Scottish Government  
Catherine Adamson, St Andrews University  
Dr Christopher Sibley, Edinburgh University  
Darius Hughes, Moderna  
Elizabeth Roper, Epidarex Capital  
Ewan Morrison, Scottish Government  
Frank Gunn-Moore, SULSA  
George Davidson, GSK  
Graeme Rose, Novartis  
Greg Stevenson, Health Consultant  
Heather Baxter, Lilly  
Jacqui Young, Roche  
John Macgill, Ettrickburn  
John Mackenzie, The Pioneer Group  
Ken Sutherland, Canon Medical  
Leigh Mair, InnoScot Health  
Lindsay McClure, NHS  
Mia Burleigh, University of the West of Scotland  
Philip Jones, BioAscent

Rhona Allison, Scottish Enterprise  
Richard Lockhart, Burness Paull LLP  
Steve Brown, Roche  
Steven Burke, Pharmaceutical Product Development (PPD)  
Stuart Carroll, Moderna  
Tom Rhodes, Pfizer UK

## Apologies

Miles Briggs MSP

## Opening and welcome

Kenneth Gibson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## Minutes of the previous meeting (November 15, 2022)

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by George Davidson, accepted by the group and seconded by Graeme Simpson MSP.

## Scottish Government update, Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise.

The Minister gave an update on the launch of the intervention innovation competition to reduce drug deaths. He reported that the Sector Export Plan had been published and that the ILG was working with government on taking this forward. The Innovation Strategy is being finalised and will be published in the coming weeks. The Data Strategy for Health and Social Care is expected to be launched later this week.

The Minister had just returned from a trip to the Far East which included a meeting with PT Bio Farma (Persero) to discuss their research and development and explore further collaboration opportunities with the Scottish life sciences sector. He also had the opportunity to highlight the partnership between i3L, University of Dundee and Combiphar, and meet with Indonesian students that will study in Scotland in the future. The trip was an opportunity to highlight Scotland's wider strengths in life sciences and explore other potential trade & investment opportunities.

In answer to a question on whether there would be new resource attached to the innovation strategy, the Minister stated that within the current budget restrictions, Scotland would need to look at how it could bid in more effectively for funding pots. In response to a question about the life science sector in Singapore, the Minister noted that Singapore has very clear ideas of where its strengths lie and has a joined-up approach, with very good links with Malaysia, Indonesia etc. When asked about the appetite there for risk-sharing and if that could be something for Scotland to consider, the Minister agreed that there is a lot of potential in partnering. The Minister agreed that there are opportunities for Scottish universities to share innovation, noting that a

number of Scottish universities are already very involved, and that there is potential for universities to work together to collaborate with international partners.

The Minister encouraged anyone interested in the innovation strategy and sector export plan to engage with these. The ILG have an awareness of this work and would be able to advise. The innovation strategy will provide a mechanism for cluster building.

It was noted that the Fraser of Allander report on the economic impact of the pharmaceutical industry in Scotland was due to be published in the coming days.

## The Future of mRNA: Opportunities and Next Steps, Dr Paul Burton, Chief Medical Officer, Moderna

Dr Burton was joined by his colleagues Darius Hughes and Stuart Carroll. He presented on the work Moderna is doing on mRNA. He described the biological mechanisms of mRNA and how it can be used potentially as vaccines and medicines that may enable the body to produce its own medicinal proteins.

Dr Burton gave an overview of Moderna's current development pipeline which covers a broad area in oncology, cardiovascular, rare disease, among other areas. He broadly talked about covid and how variants are evolving. The challenge is now up to public health systems and manufacturers to agree on what variant to put in the next vaccine.

Darius Hughes then explained that one of the challenges of an individualized vaccine approach such as one for therapeutic vaccines is to get a regulatory pathway established where the focus would be placed at HTA pathways.

Dr Burton was asked for his views on how Scotland's clinical trial structure could be improved to take on some of these trials. He stated that speed, a single contract with networks throughout Scotland, decentralised digitalised trials would all be positively significant. He believed that Scotland was perfectly poised to be a world leader if it could get these issues addressed.

When asked about public confidence in vaccines developed at speed, Dr Burton said that confidence in mRNA is less the issue now, but covid fatigue is an issue to be careful of. Need to have good, clear strong reasons that demonstrate the public health benefits. He praised Scotland for its successful vaccination rates, citing consistent healthcare advice, consistent communications and good healthcare professionals work over the years.

Dr Burton confirmed that they had considered potential innovative routes to market and that going forward there needs to be innovation in formulation design and Moderna is looking at this.

# Update on the Life Science Export Strategy and the ILG, Mark Cook, Chair, Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group

Mark Cook restated the mission and vision of the Scottish life sciences. The aim of £8bn by 2025 is already close to being met already. It is clear that Scotland needs to internationalise to grow. There is massive scope to be able to assist companies to get out to the world.

*A Trading Nation* identifies the opportunities and sets out concrete measures and aspirations to help companies achieve growth through international trade. There is huge potential. Similarly, there is potential if research and development is encouraged. The action plan was outlined to the group, which includes increasing clinical trials.

The ILG is working with other organisations including NRS and SHIP. Members of the group were encouraged to have a look at the work and get involved.

Mr Cook responded to a question about translating innovations into sales by stating that it is important to look at how we take these innovations to the world. He recognised that Scotland has lots of data and resources but that it needs to find a more collegiate way of collecting and accessing it. He acknowledged that there are issues around resource for this, but he believed there was a willingness to address these issues as the importance of data is fully recognised by government.

It was noted that Scottish Enterprise has offices in 33 different countries and can give practical support to companies and financial support to new companies looking to develop internationally.

John Mackenzie, gave a brief update on the developments that the AAA subgroup had undertaken in this area.

It was noted that the life sciences awards on 16 March will highlight the great work that is being done in the sector in Scotland.

Anyone who thinks they have something to add to this work was encouraged to contact the ILG and get involved in the subgroups.

## Closing Remarks

The Convener thanked all the speakers for their presentations and thanked members for their contributions. He reminded members to submit suggestions for upcoming meetings. He confirmed that the date of the next meeting will be on 30 May 2023.

