

Minutes
Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences
Tuesday 15th of September 2020, Microsoft Teams
Minister Ivan McKee MSP, David Lawrence (Valneva), Dr Ken Sutherland (Canon Medical Imaging)

MSPs Present:

Kenneth Gibson MSP; Convener
Graham Simpson MSP; Vice Convener
Tom Mason MSP
Lewis Macdonald MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
Ivan McKee MSP

Apologies:

Miles Briggs MSP
Willie Rennie MSP
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Donald Cameron MSP
Fulton MacGregor MSP

Opening, Welcome and Introductions

The Convener, Kenneth Gibson MSP, welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) in 2020 and outlined the agenda for the evening.

Minutes of the previous meeting (25th February 2020)

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Kenneth Gibson MSP, accepted by the group and seconded by Graeme Rose (ABPI).

AGM

- Kenneth Gibson MSP summarised the work of the group in 2020 before moving to the formal AGM where he thanked the nine MSPs who have pledged to continue supporting the group.
- ABPI Scotland Director and group Secretariat, Alison Culpan MSP, presided over the election of office bearers and ran through her thoughts on the current COVID-19 pandemic and the work of life sciences sector more generally.
- Graham Simpson MSP nominated Kenneth Gibson MSP as Convenor which was seconded by Tom Mason MSP.
- Kenneth Gibson MSP nominated Graham Simpson MSP as Vice-Convenor which was seconded by Lewis Macdonald MSP.
- Kenneth resumed chairing the meeting where ABPI Scotland were returned, unanimously, as secretariat for the coming year.
- Kenneth discussed the 2020 workplan, which aims to cover some of the following areas; the Value of Vaccination, Advanced Medicinal Therapies, Scotland's blood sciences, Diagnostics, the work of the Chief Scientist and celebrating innovation. Meeting dates will be sent out in due course.

David Lawrence, Chief Financial Officer, Valneva Pharmaceuticals,

- David Lawrence explained Valneva's corporate history as a specialist vaccine manufacturer and their work to provide immunisations for diseases with a high unmet need.
- Valneva currently offers vaccines in Chikungunya and Encephalitis, and in addition to their COVID-19 work, they also have a prospective Lyme Disease vaccine in Phase 1 and 2 trials. They expect to bring this to market within the next 3-5 years.
- David explained that their prospective COVID-19 uses inactivated vaccine technology. This type of vaccine has been used for decades and has a well understood safety profile and manufacturing process.
- A number of new vaccine technologies are being developed to treat COVID-19 which could revolutionise the field, but it was cautioned that none of these new technologies have ever made it past the regulatory approval process.
- Vaccine technology has remained relatively static, with VLP (virus like particle) technology emerging as the only significant evolution over the past three decades.
- David detailed the inactivated vaccine manufacturing and R&D process, as well as the cold storage conditions required ahead of any possible roll-out.
- Inactivated vaccines have one major advantage over newer mRNA vaccines in that they don't require sub-zero storage conditions.
- Valneva hope that their COVID-19 vaccine candidate (VLA2001) will receive regulatory approval in the second half of 2021, and the company believes the vaccine has a high probability of success.
- VLA2001 will benefit from an already licensed Dynavax adjuvant and will be dispensed in two doses.
- David described the developments to the facility in Livingston which will eventually enable production of up to 200m doses per year (based on best guess yield estimates). The drug will then travel to Sweden for final fill and finish.
- David laid out the UK Government's portfolio approach to securing a potential COVID-19 vaccine, and whilst Valneva has not been the fastest to bring a vaccine candidate to trial, it is almost certain that more than one type of vaccine will be required.

Key points from the Q and A with David Lawrence

- In response to a question from Graeme Rose (ABPI) David agreed that challenging misconceptions around vaccination was important and explained that trust and transparency was a key part of this effort.
- Tom Mason MSP asked about the long-term financing of vaccine R&D. David explained that COVID-19 has brought a new focus to vaccination and infectious disease, but that familiar hurdles exist, which includes the USA being home to 80% of life science capital.
- Clare Adamson MSP wanted to know more about educating the public on the value of vaccination, with David suggesting that some countries, notably developing nations, have a higher trust of vaccination in part due to the recent success in eradicating polio and smallpox.
- Deputy Convenor, Graham Simpson MSP, asked Valneva for a further information on their market authorisation timescales and David explained that they will present Phase 1 data in March of next year.
- Prof Andrew Tobin congratulated David on Valneva's success and asked about live plaque assays and any opportunities to link up with the University of Glasgow.
- Ian Hunter from the University of Strathclyde asked about virus mutations and their likely impact on vaccine efficacy with David explaining that the coronavirus has mutated three times since surfacing and they expect VLA2001 to be effective against each strain.

Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Trade, Innovation and Investment

- The Minister congratulated the group on the success of the meeting and the number of attendees present. He also offered his congratulations to Valneva for their work, thus far, to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The Minister explained his role during the COVID-19 crisis which has extended to engaging with industry around testing, supply, R&D and diagnostics.
- A full breakdown of this work was provided to parliament by way of a Ministerial statement which can be read [here](#). The Minister expects to make another statement to parliament in October which will announce the publication of the Inward Investment Plan.
- The challenge of providing test kits has been greatly helped by Thermo Fisher and other companies, and the Minister apologised for not being able to name check all those that have assisted.
- The Minister ran through the recent Scottish Government Programme for Government, which is rightly focused on job creation, and promoting the life sciences sector as a key driver within the Scottish economy.
- As part of their sector mapping for the Inward Investment Plan, Healthtech has been identified as one of 9 key sectors within the Scottish economy.
- The Minister described the proposed Scottish Health and Industry partnership and the need for collaboration to drive economic growth and better health outcomes.
- The Minister explained plans to roll out Supply Chain Development Programmes across multiple sectors, including life sciences, which will implement lessons learned from the efforts to strengthen PPE supply chains this year.
- There was further discussion over the inward investment plan, which forms a key plank of the internationalisation strategy.
- The Minister discussed the recent work of the industry leadership group and their focus on challenges including the reshoring of generic medicine and MMIC.

Key points from the Q and A with Minister McKee

- Dr Steven Burke (PPD) asked about the ability to enroll patients into early COVID trials, and the Minister explained the role of both the SHARE register and the PRINCIPLE trial but committed to a follow-up with PPD to discuss this offline.
- Mark Cook wanted to know how we can increase the life sciences skill base, and whilst the Minister admitted this was not his brief (Jamie Hepburn MSP) he agreed that more needed to happen to ensure life sciences was signposted as a worthwhile career for youngsters. The Minister also encouraged companies to reach out to their local schools and colleges to increase understanding of the sector and pointed out that the export plan also includes an ambition to attract global talent to Scotland.
- Clare Adamson MSP asked industry to engage with the STEM ambassador programme but acknowledged that tough economic circumstances might limit the ability of companies to offer opportunities.
- Prof Frank Gunn Moore (University of St Andrews) called for more support for universities with early career researchers likely to be hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic. Ivan agreed to feed these points into the correct Universities Minister and agreed that academia had worked extremely hard during the pandemic.

Dr Ken Sutherland, Canon Medical Imaging Europe,

- Dr Ken Sutherland described the corporate history of Canon Medical Imaging, its initial founding in Scotland and its ties to the Japanese parent company which is famous for camera and imaging products.
- A key part of their business is being able to offer insights to radiologists and clinicians through the development of AI, machine learning and big data.
- Information that can provide subtle indicators for clinicians about early disease and pathway modelling is important.
- Ken described the work of ICAIRD, its funding model from Innovate UK and the three-year project timeline. Dr Sutherland believes that this consortium needs a future beyond the initial three years in order to make the investment of time and finance worthwhile.
- Canon and others are working to train an algorithm to recognise disease which involves looking at thousands of scans to build up an accurate representation of what a specific condition looks like.
- The algorithm is tweaked using machine learning but requires access to novel data for successful validation. Access to this data is typically a challenge and they have designed a tool which enables SMEs to access and analyse safe haven data without leaving the secure confines of the NHS system.
- The AI system has been repurposed during COVID-19 to provide insights through the “clinical cockpit”. The aim of this project is to understand where to send different patients. As infection rates vary around the world, this model could be deployed in other countries.

Key points from the Q and A with Dr Ken Sutherland

- Tom Mason MSP asked what will happen to ICAIRD at the end of the initial three-year project. Dr Sutherland explained that whilst there is no legal entity who owns the project they are discussing what happens and critically the SMEs involved with ICAIRD will own their own outputs.
- Graeme Rose (ABPI) wanted to know whether the NHS experience with COVID-19 had resulted in a shift in mindset when it comes to using data. In response Ken stated his belief that data and digital tools will be essential if the NHS is to tackle the inevitable treatment backlog that has mounted during COVID-19.
- Alison Culpan (ABPI) asked whether Canon and ICAIRD were looking at potential collaborations with pharmaceutical companies. Ken described his belief in the value of companion diagnostics and talked through other Canon projects where they have collaborated with pharma internationally.

7. Closing Remarks

The Convener thanked the contributors for their presentation and reminded members to submit suggestions for upcoming meetings in 2021. He also confirmed that the date and timing of the next meeting will be sent to members in due course.

Non-MSP attendees:

Alison Culpán (ABPI), Alison Dunn (SULSA), Alison Morrish (Scottish Government), Amanda Dutton (Scottish Government), Andrew Bonser (Intusurg), Andy Currie (GSK), Avril Gold (Consultant), Barbara Blaney (The University of Edinburgh), Beth McMaster (GSK), Claire Headspeath (ABPI), Damian Crombie (Astrazeneca), David Bowie (Albany), David Lawrence (Valneva), Debbie McCreath (IBioIC), Dionne Mackison (Scottish Government), Ellys Wakeman (Ipsen), Fiona Hamill (Jansen), Frank Gunn-Moore (SULSA), Gemma Gillespie (University of Glasgow), George Davison (GSK), Graeme Rose (ABPI), Kathleen Grieve (MSD), Jim Honeyman (Chiesi), Iain Hunter (Strathclyde University), James Crichton (Scottish Government), Jennie Hampson (Kyowa Kirin), John Macgill (Ettrickburn), Siobhan Jordan (Interface), Joyce Tait (University of Edinburgh), Julie Centigoz (Accenture), Keith Robson (Keith Robson), Ken Sutherland (Canon Medical Research Europe), John Mackenzie (Roslin Institute), Maggie Clark (Novartis), Marion Butchart (Novartis), Martin Coombes (BMS), Matt Barclay (CPS), Miranda Knaggs (Bio-City), Philip Jones (Bioascent), Andy Riley (HP Com MA) BI-GB-B, Robert Crawford (Novartis), Ronnie Palin (SDS), Sandra Auld (Healthcare Public Affairs), Steven Burke (PPD), Tain Hunter (IBioIC), Joyce Tait (University of Edinburgh), Tasha Quinn (University of Glasgow), Victoria Hayes (Kyowa), Yasmin Fraser (Biogen), David Littlejohn (Strathclyde University).

Non-MSP apologies:

Sir Harry Burns (University of Strathclyde), Mr Adrian Gillespie (University of Strathclyde), Jen Ferguson (Private Consultant), Sally Hughes (Tevauk), Clive Badman (University of Strathclyde), Gail Grant (AbbVie), Jo Broomfield (Boehringer Ingelheim)