

# Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences

Tuesday 17th of September 2024, 17:45 – 19:15

## Minute

## Present

### MSPs

Kenneth Gibson MSP

Graham Simpson MSP

Jackie Baillie MSP

### Invited guests

Alastair Florence, Professor in Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Strathclyde and Director of CMAC

Ian McCubbin CBE, Chairman of RoslinCT

Greig Rooney, Managing Director, Valneva Scotland

### Non-MSP Group Members

Alison Culpan, Director, ABPI Scotland (secretariat)

Andrew Gregory, Vertex

Andrew Hollingsworth, Vertex

Annie McRobbie SSERC

Brian Forbes Astrazeneca

Claire Headspeath, ABPI Scotland

Dame Anna Dominiczak, Scottish Government

Dan Montgomery, The Data Lab

David Ridd, Valneva

Esmé Pringle, Ettrickburn

Ewan Morrison, Scottish Government

Fiona Nicolson, Burness Paull LLP

Gareth Lawrence, Atos

Gary White, IQVIA

Gillian McArthur, Boehringer-Ingelheim

Graeme Rose, Novartis

John Macgill, Ettrickburn  
Katie Murray Astrazeneca  
Lewis MacAskill, Scottish Parliament  
Mark Cook, Chair ILG  
Professor Alasdair Nisbet, Moredun Research Institute  
Professor Andrew Tobin, Glasgow University  
Robert Crawford, Thornton Ross  
Sarah Hunt, Skills Development Scotland  
Sonja Hart, Burness Paul LLP

## Apologies

Brian Whittle MSP  
Michael Marra MSP

## Agenda item 1

### **Opening, Welcome and Introductions**

Convener Kenneth Gibson (KG) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Minutes of the previous meeting (May)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted, proposed by Brian Forbes and seconded by Alison Culpan. There were no matters arising.

## Agenda item 2

### **CMAC: A Centre for Innovation in Medicines Manufacturing**

#### **Alastair Florence, Professor in Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Strathclyde and Director of CMAC**

Alastair Florence (AF) gave an overview of CMAC and its wide range of national and international collaborations. He said Glasgow now has world leading infrastructure with CMAC that is being supported to grow by public and industry funding until at least 2032. He said the focus of CMAC is increasingly demand-led and it is currently working on process and manufacturing design innovation and using predictive models, and bringing together the multidisciplinary team, to closely align to the needs of their industry partners. These included meeting Industry 5.0 Goals around sustainability (including reducing waste), adaptive, responsive and resilient processes and ensuring human centricity in manufacturing, using technology as an enabler.

He spoke about the challenges of anchoring the impact of CMAC and its spin outs within the West of Scotland while the facilities and ecosystem in Southeast England continue to attract some young businesses to leave.

He said there is a growing need for skilled workers, especially within digital capabilities. CMAC is working to develop talent and equip people to be the medicine manufacturing leads of the future through its training programme. It has graduated over 100 PhDs to date with funding for another 90 recently confirmed. There is a huge demand from industry partners for these skilled researchers.

AF spoke about the challenge of growing and sustaining a global research hub that attracts and retains world class people in the current fiscal environment – and the opportunity to create a leading Research Institute for Medicines Manufacturing.

### Q&A

AF said Scotland will be unique in the world if it is able to establish a continuum between manufacturing and patient care. He said a long-term goal would be to link together medicine design, performance and the supply chain; adding a joined-up approach between industry and NHS will be key to this. He said Scotland is large enough for real world experience gained here to be useful to inform wider roll out, while potentially small enough for a national approach to be feasible.

AF said CMAC is nimble enough with the right skills and facilities to rapidly implement small scale manufacturing to support regional and even national demand.

AF said CMAC has demonstrated over its 20 years that there is ongoing demand from industry for its services. He said Scotland has a research base, but R&D is not fundamentally sustainable in its own right because it is an investment rather than revenue earning, so there is a need to focus on ensuring Scotland continues to attract new global research investment.

AF said CMAC has world-leading tech that no other country has which generates reputation. The ability to shorten the development cycle, reduce the cost and make manufacturing more sustainable will all benefit patients. He spoke about the capability in CMAC to reformulate existing medicines within polypills, different medicines within one dose, which can improve adherence and generate overall cost savings.

## Agenda item 3

### **Manufacturing Gene Therapies**

#### **Ian McCubbin CBE, Chairman of RoslinCT**

Ian McCubbin (IM) gave an overview of RoslinCT which largely operates out of the Edinburgh BioQuarter. He said a new facility has also recently opened in Boston.

He said working with Vertex to create the world's first CRISPR-derived medicine, CASGEVY, which is licensed for sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia, marking a milestone in RoslinCT's history. He said this curative treatment has heralded a new era in medicine and is an opportunity to reset the way the NHS undertakes the health technology appraisal processes for advanced one-off 'curative' treatments to bring them to patients.

He said there are now around 270 people employed by RoslinCT in Edinburgh but there is a high turnover. He gave an overview of the RoslinCT Training Academy, which is helping with this, by working with local universities to provide specialised, hands-on training for people working in cell and gene therapy manufacturing.

He said the challenge in patients getting access to these transformative medicines is their high price tag and the NHS's limited resources to pay for them. He said the way industry and the NHS work together must change to make cell and gene therapies accessible early. He suggested the NHS should be able to provisionally accept these medicines early, allowing the generation of the real-life data companies need to prove effectiveness, in an arrangement that is beneficial to all parties.

He said RoslinCT has a unique capability to innovate in cell therapy and will need to expand – however there is still a question of whether this will happen in Edinburgh or Boston. He said this will depend on Scotland's ability to create an environment where innovation is adopted quickly and effectively.

## Agenda item 4

### **Greig Rooney – Valneva Scotland**

Greig Rooney (GR) gave an overview of Valneva's activity in Scotland, where it has recently built its new Almeida facility and is now established as Scotland's largest vaccine producer. He said more than 650,000 people in the UK have been immunised with Valneva vaccines since 2017.

GR said Valneva's ambition is to be the best place to work in Scotland's life sciences sector. The company has invested significantly in its people over the last three years, including in training, development and encouraging women to enter the sector. He said it has been recognised for its success over the past 12 months by several award-giving bodies including the West Lothian Chamber of Commerce Innovation and Resilience award, Life Sciences Scotland Awards and the RoSPA Silver Health and Safety Award.

### Q&A

IM said the decision on whether RoslinCT will choose to expand in Edinburgh will be aided by the availability of funds from the Life Sciences Office in Westminster and Scottish Enterprise. He said expansion should be straight forward – a nearby facility has already been identified on the outskirts of Edinburgh. He added that Scotland must focus on the long-term consolidation of industries like life sciences where expansion is so important.

In answer to a question on the scope for treatment of common chronic conditions, IM said single gene corrections have been the focus of development work and Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak added that multiple genetic corrections were closer than we thought.

**Close**

Kenneth Gibson concluded the meeting.

The next meeting of the CPG on Life Sciences will take place on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2024.