

Minutes
Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences
Tuesday 19th of January 2021, Microsoft Teams
Minister Ivan McKee MSP, Mairi Spowage (Fraser of Allander Institute), Prof Andrew Morris
(HDR UK), Prof Nicholas Mills and Colan Mehaffey (Data Loch)

MSPs Present:

Kenneth Gibson MSP; Convener
Graham Simpson MSP; Vice Convener
Tom Mason MSP
Fulton MacGregor
Clare Adamson MSP
Ivan McKee MSP

Apologies:

Miles Briggs MSP
Willie Rennie MSP
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Donald Cameron MSP
Lewis Macdonald MSP

Opening, Welcome and Introductions

The Convener, Kenneth Gibson MSP, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) in 2021 and outlined the agenda for the evening.

Minutes of the previous meeting (25th September 2020)

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Graham Simpson MSP, accepted by the group and seconded by George Davidson (GlaxoSmithKline).

Ministerial Update from Ivan McKee MSP

- Mr. McKee welcomed the fact that over 70 participants had joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams and suggested that such strong turnout underlines current interest in life science.
- The Minister explained that since the last meeting his Ministerial remit has expanded with the Investment, Innovation and Trade brief now containing responsibility for digital participation and digital strategy.
- Mr. McKee was keen to thank those on the call who had recently contributed to various Scottish Government efforts to increase and expand COVID-19 testing. The success of the Lighthouse Lab in Glasgow was mentioned.
- The sector's R&D footprint was discussed with positive numbers reported in the latest BERD surgery with life science turnover sitting at well over £6bn per annum and well on its way to meeting 2025 goals.
- The Minister discussed recent outputs from the Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group, and the launch of the Strategic Response Plan at the well-attended Scotsman Life Sciences Conference in November.
- Finally, the Minister touched upon the findings from the recent Fraser of Allander Institute Economic Impact report detailing the strength of the pharmaceutical sector. The Minister made it clear that the pharmaceutical industry is an integral part of both, the life sciences sector, and also the health tech sector which was outlined in the recent Foreign Direct Investment Strategy.

Key points from the Q and A with Minister Ivan McKee

- *In response to a question from Maggie Clark (Novartis) on Advanced Therapies the Minister committed to connecting her with the relevant policy officials within the Scottish Government who could assist.*
- *Martin Coombes (BMS) asked the Minister about data and the need to allot funding to improve the healthcare data ecosystem, Mr. McKee confirmed that the trade directorate has budget which can support these initiatives.*
- *Sir Michael Ferguson (University of Dundee) outlined Dundee University's work with the Gates Foundation on COVID-19 therapeutics but wanted to know what type of work was underway to understand the difference between good and bad COVID-19. Mr. McKee congratulated Sir Mike on his work at the university and explained some of the data which the Scottish Government holds in this area.*
- *Fulton MacGregor MSP raised an offer of help from a business within his constituency which believes can help reduce vaccine wastage. Mr. McKee pledged that his office would look at the specifics of this offer.*
- *Graeme Rose (ABPI) asked the Minister what has been his and the Scottish Government's biggest learning since the pandemic and Mr. McKee explained that the number of businesses who were at the forefront of developments in vaccines and treatments, who had previously been in receipt of economic development support to build that capability, was the biggest revelation.*

Mairi Spowage, Fraser of Allander Institute,

- Mairi explained the background of the report and previous work to quantify the economic impact of the sector.
- Mairi discussed the current state of the Scottish economy and how the pandemic has affected parts of the economy differently and the need to see recovery spread across the country.
- According to their analysis, direct employment in the sector has increased by 10% since the last report and now stands at 5,600. Gross Value Added in the sector also increased to £1.8bn and productivity, R&D spend and exports all increased.
- Mairi was keen to stress that the high productivity of the sector, which is nearly three times the Scottish average, was a key success story for the sector.
- Mairi also explained in depth the spread of employment across the country with the sector making a significant contribution to reducing inequality and bolstering the wellbeing economy.
- Fraser of Allander also interviewed various stakeholders from industry as part of their research and identified some key themes that can help the industry continue to grow, data and the need for continued collaboration.

Key points from the Q and A with Mairi Spowage

- *In response to a question from Graham Simpson MSP on the impact of COVID-19 on the sector, Mairi explained that whilst many pharma companies were able to pivot during the pandemic, the continued pause in clinical research was causing issues for some in the sector.*
- *Frank Gunn-Moore (University of St Andrews) explained that the current lockdown had placed an enormous strain on early career researchers and more support was needed for academia.*
- *Alex Stobart (Mydex) asked how the third sector could contribute to this story via participation in trials and collecting real world evidence. Mairi agreed and stated that many stakeholders had cited the ability to capture patient outcomes as central to future investment.*

- *Sir Michael Ferguson (University of Dundee) raised the problem of being able to attract VC investment to university spin outs and wondered whether FAI had a view. Mairi agreed that this has been a problem for a long-time, and there is a need to spread investment out from London and the South East.*

Professor Andrew Morris, Health Data Research UK

- Professor Morris discussed the role of data science within the fourth industrial revolution and how we need to harness this resource using appropriate governance arrangements.
- HDR UK is the national institute for health data science. Professor explained that their mission is to unite the UK's health data to enable discoveries to benefit the lives of patients. Their vision is to map and enhance every health and care interaction through the use of data.
- According to Professor Morris, the UK healthcare sector sits around mid-table in terms of its adoption of artificial intelligence.
- Scale is very important for researchers in order to draw insights from data, and Scotland needs to view itself as part of a global ecosystem of data.
- However, for this to happen data must be interoperable, and HDR's mission is to provide universal standards for the curation and adoption of data. Its role is as an independent broker, but not a data controller.
- Professor Morris explained that banks have harnessed interoperable data for years with competitors signing up to a system of common standards that enables wire transfers and other fintech tools to operate.
- HDR UK has been heavily involved in COVID-19 research and the RECOVERY trial which showed the benefits of dexamethasone which was informed by healthcare data.
- Professor Morris explained that researchers often spend more time accessing data rather than interrogating it, and this needs to be flipped around. The following principles should apply, Fair Data, Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable.
- Professor Morris believes that the UK needs to pivot and become a leader in ethical data in order to attract investment and growth post-Brexit.

Key points for Q and A with Professor Andrew Morris

- *In response to a question from Alison Culpin on the barriers to realising these goals, Professor Morris explained that Scotland is unfortunately falling behind the rest of the UK when it comes to using healthcare data resources and cited the fact that 55m GP records in England are available for research but not in Scotland.*
- *Kenneth Gibson MSP confirmed that the group would write to the Scottish Government on the need to accelerate the data agenda.*
- *Martin Coombes (BMS) asked Professor Morris about the speed of progress and Prof Morris highlighted the work of the Mayo Clinic and their 2030 data strategy which saw 140 million patient records joined-up in just 8 months.*

Prof Nick Mills and Colan Mehaffey, Data Loch

- Professor Nick Mills explained his role as a clinician and his work over the past decade to improve the treatment of heart disease through the better use of healthcare data.
- Colan Mehaffey explained Data Loch emerged from the city region deal as part of an ambition to transform Edinburgh and the South East of Scotland as the data capital of Europe.
- The central point is to create a hub where the public, private and third sectors collaborate to enable data-driven advances in the delivery of health and social care.
- Professor Mills explained that DataLoch is a storage repository that holds local, regional and national health and social care data for residents in Edinburgh and South East Scotland.

- According to Prof Mills, this data is then defined, linked and made accessible for research and innovation.
- Prof Mills explained that DataLoch is currently entering its Beta phase where the public will be engaged in service design and next year it hopes to launch with a fully operational product.
- Prof Mills also explained that DataLoch has been working to understand what insights their data can deliver to combat COVID-19. Their work has included work to create a comprehensive repository with clinically adjudicated diagnoses, complications, and outcomes. This will then support care pathways and clinical trial design.

Key points for Q and A with Professor Mills and Colan Mehaffey

- *In response to a question from Graham Simpson MSP, Colan explained that data is currently siloed and only accessible on a project-by-project basis which makes wider interrogation and use of data sets more difficult. In holding the data in its native format DataLoch is preserving opportunities to use this data in the future.*
- *Graeme Rose (ABPI) asked about how we can generate wider understanding and patient trust when it comes to the use of their data. Prof Mills and Colan explained that communicating the win to patients is important and they need to demonstrate that using data can improve health outcomes and helps health and care service providers improve delivery.*
- *Alison Culpan (ABPI) asked whether the DataLoch model could be expanded to other areas, and it was explained that the common data model will be critical in increasing the scope and remit of DataLoch through federation with other safe havens and data resources*

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:

Adam McGeoch (Strathclyde University), Alison Dun (SULSA), Alison Culpan (ABPI), Alison Paterson (NHS National Services Scotland), Andrew Fowle (Scottish Government), Andrew Howie (Scottish Enterprise), Professor Andrew Morris (Health Data Research UK), Professor Andrew Tobin (Glasgow University), Andy Currie (GSK), Barbara Blaney (Edinburgh University), Claire Headspeath (ABPI), Charles Weller (NHS Research Scotland), Clare Morrison (Royal Pharmaceutical Society), Clare Reid (SCDI), Clive Badman (Strathclyde University), Colan Mehaffey (Edinburgh University), Damian Crombie (Astrazeneca), David Bowie (Albany), Daphne Stewart (Orion Pharma), David Bowie (Albany), David Kelly (SCDI), David Littlejohn (Strathclyde University), Davneet Judge (Roche), Derek Ballantyne (Scottish Enterprise), Dr Dionne Mackison (Scottish Government), Emma Eusebi (ABPI), Ellys Wakeman (Ipsen), Euan Dick (Scottish Government), Fiona Hamill (Jansen), Frank Gunn-Moore (SULSA), Gail Grant (AbbVie), George Davison (GSK), Graeme Rose (ABPI), Greg Stevenson (Roche), Heather Rankine (Exact Sciences), Ian Hunter (Strathclyde University), Jacqui Young (Roche), James Crichton (Scottish Government), Jim Honeyman (Chiesi), John Macgill (Ettrickburn), John Mackenzie (Roslin Institute), Joyce Tait (Edinburgh University), Julie Cetingoz Accenture), Karen Facey (Edinburgh University), Keith Park (MS Society), Keith Small (Lexington Communications), Ken Sutherland (Canon Medical Research Europe), Maggie Clark (Novartis), Mairi Spowage (Strathclyde University), Mary Canning (Epidarex), Marion Butchart (Novartis), Martin Coombes (BMS), Michael Barrett (SULSA), Sir Mike Ferguson (University of Dundee), Natalie Sparks (Scottish Enterprise), Nel Whiting (Scottish Government), Professor Nick Mills (Edinburgh University), Nicolas Peyret (Scottish Enterprise), Phillip Jones (BioAscent), Sally Hughes (Tevauk), Sandra Auld (Healthcare Public Affairs), Sharon McKendry (Scottish Enterprise), Siobhan Jordan (Interface), Steven Burke (PPD), Stuart McCann (Roche), Stuart Robertson (MSD), Sue Bailey (BMS), Tom Barlow (Scottish Government).