

Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences

8 June 2022 17.45 – 19.15

Minute

Present

MSPs

Minister Ivan McKee MSP

Kenneth Gibson MSP

Graham Simpson MSP

Miles Briggs MSP

Michael Marra MSP

Invited guests

Gary White, Deputy Chair Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group

Scott Cooke, General Manager, UK & Ireland, Bristol Myers Squibb

Non-MSP Group Members

Alison Culpan

Helen Reilly

Claire Headspeath

George Davidson

Martin Coombes

Graeme Rose

Karen Facey

Professor Ferguson

Ken Sutherland

Sue Bailley

Hubert Bland

Steve Brown

Matthew Bradbury

Brian Forbes

John Macgill

Frank Gunn-Moore

Alistair Bruce

Brenda Dooley

Bruce Whitelaw

Heather Rankine

Greg Stevenson

Steve Brown

Steven Burke

Philip Jones
Alison Dun
Laura Zoch
Giles Hamilton
Alex Dalrymple

Apologies

Fulton McGregor MSP
Ewan Morrison
Fiona Hamill
Professor Roma Macguire
Nicolas Peyret
Heather Rankine
Heather Baxter
Andrew Howie
Julie Brady
Peter Ellingworth
Fiona Hamill
Dave Tudor
Professor Andrew Tobin
Michael Gray
Avril Gold
Andy Currie
Clare Morrison
David Newby

Opening, Welcome and Introductions

Kenneth Gibson welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed his delight at being able to meet in person for the first time in over two years. He outlined the agenda for the evening which included the formal election of office bearers and secretariat.

Minutes of the previous meeting (February 22nd, 2022)

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Miles Briggs MSP, accepted by the group and seconded by Michael Marra MSP.

AGM

Kenneth Simpson MSP summarised the work of the group in the previous session of parliament before moving to the formal AGM where he thanked the eight MSPs who have pledged to support the group in the new session of parliament.

ABPI Scotland Director and previous group secretariat, Alison Culpan MSP, presided over the election of office bearers and discussed the importance of the group.

Miles Briggs MSP nominated Kenneth Gibson MSP as Convenor which was seconded by Michael Marra MSP.

Miles Briggs MSP nominated Graham Simpson MSP as Vice-Convenor which was seconded by Michael Marra MSP.

Kenneth Gibson MSP resumed chairing the meeting where ABPI Scotland were returned, unanimously, as secretariat for the coming year.

Kenneth discussed the 2022 workplan and encouraged members of the CPG to send ideas for topics to the secretariat for consideration.

The Future of The Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group - Gary White, Deputy Chair Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group

The Scottish life sciences sector employs 41,700 people across 800 organisations. Generated £7.41 billion in 2019 and a GVA of £3.1 billion (up 10%). Total turnover in the life sciences growth sector was £3.3 billion, an increase of 17% in the nominal sense. Whilst we would expect to see some impact from covid on this, it is still a very positive trajectory. The ILG has to have an ambitious strategy for the future based on this success.

There are however significant challenges facing the sector. Covid continues to have an impact on resources: the UK has lost attractiveness as a research location; access to health data is sub-optimal; there is limited international impact; need to align the multiple bodies in life sciences in Scotland that have shared goals but different strategies; diversity across the sector is a great thing but also presents challenges to ensure all areas are thriving; sustainability is a key tenet of every focus of the ILG, as is diversity and inclusion.

The ILG is looking to refresh its sub-groups to ensure the group is supporting the triple helix effectively. Need to ensure accountability and action for the recommendations the group makes.

The ILG's visions for 2030 will focus on digitised healthcare, innovation infrastructure, research environment and Scotland sustains. Aiming to meet the strategic objectives of the Scottish Government. Need to raise awareness of what the Scottish Life Science sector does and grow the engagement with the sector to increase diversity within the sector. Linking with STEM to engage young people in science and bring them into the sector in the future.

Q & A

Professor Ferguson highlighted the lack of innovation infrastructure which is leading to companies leaving Scotland. Universities are creating innovation and there is a need to harness this. He gave the example of laboratory space, with there being few places in Scotland where the space required is available.

Phil Jones asked that when reformulating subgroups, it would be important need to include recruitment and skills as these continue to be a challenge as is the requirement for space.

Michael Marra asked how Scotland compares internationally, and Gary undertook to provide the data.

There was discussion on the preparedness of the future pipeline. Still don't have enough courses to equip graduates. Frank Gunn-Moore stated that SULSA can help to support this work. There are opportunities to develop university courses to support students and to help develop graduates.

Miles Briggs asked about digitised healthcare. Gary agreed that Scotland is not where it would want to be, and that there is a clear action plan from the ILG which needs to be taken forward. A unified health data structure is a priority.

George Davidson (GSK) asked how organisations not around the table get involved. Gary recognised that the ILG needs to engage with as many stakeholders as possible. Subgroups are open to anyone.

Brian Forbes asked about recovery of the NHS, and how the ILG can help to drive this recovery. Again, Gary welcomed input from stakeholders on this.

Ken Sutherland highlighted the value of the examples and experiences we already have in Scotland and suggested that it would be useful to double down on what works in Scotland, focus on what works well and support these initiatives.

Martin Coombes (BMS) said that an improving clinical research environment subgroup would be welcome, and Gary agreed that this was an area that many want to improve.

Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise

The Minister highlighted some of the events and visits he had undertaken, including the Pharma Integrates conference, the A3 group conference and the Industrial Biotechnology conference at Strathclyde Uni, BMS and the Valneva site. He also highlighted that the FDI world forum was held in Scotland, looking at inward investment into the life science sector.

He was planning visits over the summer and encouraged members to contact him if they would like him to visit them.

The Minister stated that he was very engaged in taking forward the work of the ILG along with Maree Todd MSP. The data piece should be in a good place, there is work to be done to realise the potential, and the data strategy for H&SC will be key to this. Potential for Scotland to be world leading in this space.

With regard to inward innovation, again Scotland is in a good place but more work to be done to put in place the export plan. Taking forward the Campbell report recommendations which look to increase business investment and deliver on these.

The Minister mentioned the innovation strategy and expressed that he was keen this addressed some of the issues around infrastructure and identify what Scotland is really good at and can be global leaders on.

With regard to skills, talent attraction and retention he highlighted that the 10-year economic strategy looks at aligning education with business needs more effectively. He stated that there was a focus on attracting those highly skilled from other places in the UK.

Q & A

Graham Simpson asked about retaining companies by ensuring that adequate space is available. The Minister highlighted developments in Edinburgh, Newhouse, Glasgow and Aberdeen but looking to do more and try to keep pace with demand.

Miles Briggs asked how better health for patients can be driven forward without the NHS pushing back on this as it faces the impact of covid. The Minister recognised the importance of pushing innovation forward to improve efficiency. Digitisation of the system could bring the way we manage patients into the 21st century. Important not just for the life sciences but for the good of the NHS in Scotland.

Professor Ferguson highlighted the bottleneck around additional R&D that is required to drive out innovation but limited funding available for this leaving a vacuum in this space. The Minister stated that he would be keen to discuss this further with Professor Ferguson.

A presentation on the recent Bristol Myers Squibb/PWC report 'Reimagining the Future of Life Sciences 2030', focusing on clinical trials - Scott Cooke, General Manager, UK & Ireland, Bristol Myers Squibb

BMS are leaders in oncology, haematology and cardiovascular disease. They have a strong presence in immunology, fibrosis and specialty medicine.

Scott gave an overview of the life sciences sector in Scotland and highlighted BMS' contribution to this. He stated that whilst Scotland does well within the UK context, looking internationally it is not as successful. There is a good foundation but there exists an opportunity to improve with an ambitious vision for life sciences in Scotland.

He outlined the challenges within Scotland's healthcare system:

- The COVID-19 backlog of care which has led to capacity challenges
- Need to hasten clinical trial restart to improve patient outcomes and investment opportunities
- Need to enhance data collection infrastructure
- Need to accelerate uptake of innovative medicines to deliver world-leading health outcomes

Scott introduced the BMS/PwC report - Reimagining the Future of life Sciences 2030, which aims to give focus and momentum to Scotland's healthcare policy.

The report identified four supercharge capabilities, critical to UK success Clinical research – data and AI; clinical research; advanced therapies manufacturing; and access to innovative medicines.

Scott also provided an assessment of the clinical research environment in Scotland which illustrated the value of a healthy clinical research environment. He highlighted the current challenges - delayed clinical trial restart which has disrupted valuable research and uneven access to clinical trials which can exacerbate health inequalities. There's a need to improve and address equity of access to patient recruitment.

Scott stated that BMS is keen to work in partnership to achieve improvement.

Q & A

Ken Sutherland raised the challenge around the speed for adopting state of the art innovation which can impact on the ability to bring innovation to Scotland.

Karen Facey asked if industry could help by funding specific university places. Alison Culpan highlighted that 100 PhDs had been achieved through Strathclyde University, funded by GSK. It was noted that other universities could adopt a similar template. It was also reported that the CBI is also looking at this area.

Professor Ferguson noted that despite the ageing global demographic, companies don't seem to tackle the multi-morbidities of ageing. Scott and his team reported that this is something that BMS is exploring.

Graham Simpson asked what is working well elsewhere with regard to clinical trials. It was noted that in Spain, clinical trials were socialised and publicised with a specific campaign. They also made funding straightforward and have a much quicker infrastructure to facilitate studies rather than acting as a barrier. It was noted that the ABPI report – [Clinical Research in the UK: an opportunity for growth](#) - had more information on this.

Closing Remarks

The Convener thanked all the speakers for their presentations and members for their contributions. He reminded members to submit suggestions for upcoming meetings in 2023. He also confirmed that the date and timing of the next meeting will be sent to members in due course.