Looking to the future of Medicines Manufacturing in the UK

On 31st March, KTN, in partnership with Innovate UK, hosted the Medicines Manufacturing Challenge Community Event, showcasing the latest projects and the research and infrastructure developments that will accelerate the development and manufacture of vital advanced therapies, medicines and vaccines in the UK.

We were delighted to have Steve Bagshaw, during his first week as the **Government's Vaccine Task Force Supply Chain Lead,** to share his thoughts on the extraordinary year we have just experienced, and where we go from here.

2020, a hell of a year – what have we learned and where do we go from here?

Steve Bagshaw former Chief Executive of Fujifilm Diosynth, and now Supply Chain and Manufacturing Lead for the UK government's vaccine taskforce reviewed the extraordinary events of the past year leading up to the deployment of vaccines at scale, and the collaboration within the bioscience ecosystem that supported it. At the start of lockdown in 2020, the Bio Industries Association "recognised that there would be a real drive to use manufacturing to get ourselves out of this and we mustn't drop the ball." Nascent supply chains were being built to support the work of Oxford University and Imperial College. Indeed, almost the entire manufacturing capacity available in the UK was ultimately to be deployed to support the different platforms chosen by the vaccine taskforce.Centres worked closely together to provide new manufacturing capacity for mRNA vaccines and to repurpose existing space.

The taskforce was able to find options in the UK thanks to prior strategic decisions, and most recently investments that flowed from the 2017 life sciences industrial strategy review undertaken by Professor Sir John Bell. The taskforce invested in leveraging and expanding that capacity, including accelerating the vaccine manufacturing and research centre (VMIC) due to fully come on stream in 2022. It

will be able to manufacture 70 million doses of vaccines within a six-month timeframe – 20 times what was originally envisaged.

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The UK has the key building blocks with excellence in academic research, NHS clinical trials capability and a strong relationship with the medicines regulator. The vaccine effort, says Steve Bagshaw, has demonstrated that “you need a really strong midfield team” to take great ideas and work on their scale up and translation into commercial products.

The entire biosciences network, from the cell and gene therapy catapult to the Centre for Process Innovation, all worked together during the pandemic.
“You've got this fantastic community that we need to turn into one UK translational capability that we can sell to the world.” Around £1 billion a year is needed of inward investment to create the vision spelt out in the 2017 life sciences strategy review.
The expansion of markets, such as biologics growing at 8% per year, and advanced therapies at 20% year, means companies are looking to invest, he said.
“What we need to be doing is to make sure that they think the UK is a really good place to do it.” This means investing in skills from school level onwards. The industry also wants to attract people mid-career (he is one who made that move), including women returning from maternity leave who could bring new skills.

LIsten to Steve’s talk, and a recording of the whole event here.