

## Midlands Engine APPG - Health and Life Sciences Subgroup

**Date:** 25 October 2021, 13.00 - 14.00.

### **Attendees:**

#### **Parliamentarians**

Midlands Engine APPG Co-Chair: Darren Henry MP, Conservative MP for Broxtowe

Midlands Engine APPG Co-Chair: Lord Ravensdale, Crossbench Peer

Midlands Engine APPG Health and Life Sciences subgroup Co-Chair, Dr Luke Evans MP, Conservative MP for Bosworth

Midlands Engine APPG Health and Life Sciences subgroup Co-Chair, Health and Life Sciences subgroup: Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Labour Peer

Mark Garnier MP, Conservative MP for Wyre Forest

Josh Boughton, for the Office of Phillip Dunne MP, Conservative MP for Ludlow

Conner MacDonald, for the Office of Alicia Kearns MP, Conservative MP for Rutland and Melton - virtual

#### **Guests**

Rachael Greenwood, Executive Director, Midlands Engine

Dr Nik Kotecha OBE, Chairman, Morningside Pharmaceuticals

Dr Eliot Marston, Head of Strategic Projects & Partnerships, University of Birmingham

Professor Melanie Calvert, Director of BHP Centre for Regulatory Science & Innovation

Professor Richard Bowtell, Head of the Sir Peter Mansfield Imaging Centre

### **Minutes:**

#### **Opening remarks**

- **Lord Hunt** welcomed attendees and speakers. Highlighted the importance of the health and life sciences sector in the Midlands and said that the core focus of the APPG Health subgroup should be to help drive investment and focus for the sector.
- **Dr Luke Evans** said that the Midlands region has a great deal to offer when it comes to health and life sciences. Agreed with Lord Hunt's point that the core focus of this group should be to drive investment in the sector within the Midlands.

### **Presentations:**

#### **Presentation by Dr Nik Kotecha**

**Full speaker presentation can be accessed via the following link:** [Midlands Engine APPG Health Sub-Group Presentation](#)

- **Sector strengths in the Midlands:** Said the Midlands has an immense concentration of expertise when it comes to health and life sciences. Highlighted that the sector generates £9.5 billion GVA for the region annually. Also said that the Midlands has particular expertise on things like clinical trials and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in clinical trials, and on pandemic preparedness research.

- **Further opportunities:** Argued that the region's two new freeports could be significant opportunities for the health and life sciences sector in the Midlands, as they will provide more export opportunities for innovative SMEs in the sector. Also said that there is an opportunity for the sector to become a key driver of levelling up in the Midlands.
- **Challenges:** Highlighted skills as a key issue for the sector in the Midlands. Said that there is a shortage of a skilled regulators and many of the professionals that the sector requires are based in the South East. Argued that major skills investment in the region is needed to support the sector. Moreover, said the EU transition has been challenging for the sector and generated much uncertainty.

#### **Presentation by Professor Melanie Calvert and Dr Eliot Marston**

Full speaker presentation can be accessed via the following link: [Regulatory Science Presentation](#)

#### **Regulatory science in the Midlands**

- **Sector strengths in the Midlands:** Said the Midlands has an opportunity to become a UK and world leader on regulatory science, as cutting-edge research on AI and remote clinical trials, among many other things, is already taking place in the region. Highlighted the development of the international guidance on how to incorporate AI into clinical trials as a key example of such cutting-edge research.
- **Challenges:** Said that a key challenge facing UK regulatory science is a lack of skills and problems with finding qualified regulators to approve new and innovative medicines. Argued that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been especially struggling since Brexit, as many experienced regulators have left the UK.
- **Post-Brexit opportunities:** Said more work needs to be done on how the UK can capitalise on existing strengths in the regulatory science sector, and how these can be leveraged in a post-Brexit world. Also argued that the most important thing for the Midlands Engine Health Sub-Group to do is to make the case for more investment in UK regulatory science and the case for the Midlands as the UK leader in the 'RegTech' space.

#### **Presentation by Professor Richard Bowtell**

Full speaker presentation can be accessed via the following link: [MRI Technology Presentation](#)

#### **MRI technology**

- **Innovation in the Midlands:** Highlighted the University of Nottingham's history of leading not only the UK, but also the world on MRI technology. Including by being the first place in Europe to install a 7T scanner. Also discussed the cutting-edge research on MRI taking place at the University of Nottingham and the Sir Peter Mansfield Imaging Centre and highlighted the role of the Midlands Medical Imaging Network.

- **Bid for national imaging centre:** Explained that the University of Nottingham has submitted a bid, joint with the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), for £29 million to establish the UK's first 11.7T MRI scanner. Said that this would be operated in Nottingham as a national facility, highlighting Nottingham's role as a national and global platform for world-leading neuroscience-focused and clinical studies.

#### Questions:

**Lord Hunt:** Asked why the regulatory issues and the problems with regulators leaving the MHRA are a Midlands-specific problem and not a national one?

- **Professor Kotecha:** Said this issue is relevant to the whole of the UK, but especially to the Midlands due to the concentration of innovative medical and life sciences companies operating in the region. Argued that as regulators are leaving the MHRA, the process of obtaining regulatory approval is slowing down and hampering the ability of Midlands companies to innovate.
- **Professor Calvert:** Argued that this issue is particularly relevant to the Midlands, as the region already has a proven track-record of delivering on key regulatory science innovations. Said that as such, the region should lead UK innovation within the sector.

#### Concluding remarks and suggested next steps:

- **Dr Luke Evans** said that to enable the Midlands Engine to take day's discussion forward, the organisation should work collaboratively with Midlands MPs to bring this issue to the Government's attention and illustrate how issues with the MHRA will impact the Midlands.
- **Darren Henry and Dr Luke Evans** agreed that good next steps would be to bring forward parliamentary questions on the regulatory issues discussed, and to schedule a House of Commons and/or Westminster Hall debate.

**Dr Luke Evans and Lord Hunt thanked presenters and attendees**

**Meeting closed**