



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences



**Kenneth Gibson MSP**  
*Convener*

Welcome to the third annual report of the Cross-Party Group on Life Sciences in the Scottish Parliament for the current session.

The Group serves as a forum to bring together Scotland's expanding life sciences sector with Members of the Scottish Parliament, celebrating achievements and identifying areas where we, as policymakers, can contribute to making Scotland a destination where people want to learn, feel encouraged to innovate, and are supported to stay and grow.

Over the past year, we have addressed a range of topics, summarised on the following pages. Our meetings are more than just showcases of the projects we learn about; they also create opportunities for MSPs to advance ideas with Scottish Government ministers. We were pleased to see the Innovation and Investable Asset Fund, aimed at helping retain fast-growing start-ups in Scotland, come to fruition. A team from the Scottish Government's Technology, Innovation and

Entrepreneurship Division visited Dundee University to speak with Professor Sir Mike Ferguson, the originator of this initiative.

Since our last meeting, I have had the privilege of visiting the University of Strathclyde to meet the CMAC medicines manufacturing innovation team and witness their laboratory prototypes first-hand.

As Convener, I do not set the agenda – that lies with you, our members and supporters. If there is a topic you believe we should discuss in 2025, please do get in touch with the Secretariat.

The Cross-Party Group is a true partnership, and I would like to thank my fellow MSPs, my staff, the ABPI as our Secretariat, and all of you for your support and enthusiasm.

We look forward to the year ahead.



*Alastair  
Florence  
shows Kenneth  
around CMAC*

**Graham Simpson MSP**  
*Deputy Convener*



**Jackie Baillie MSP**  
*Member*



**Miles Briggs MSP**  
*Member*



**Craig Hoy MSP**  
*Member*



**Fulton MacGregor MSP**  
*Member*



**Michael Marra MSP**  
*Member*



**Sue Webber MSP**  
*Member*



**Brian Whittle MSP**  
*Member*



## The Meetings 2023-2024

**14 November 2023**

**The Pipeline: from fundamental sciences to clinical trials, a new faster approach to understand and treat dementia**

Professor Frank Gunn-Moore, University of St Andrews and Professor Craig Ritchie, Founder, Scottish Brain Sciences

**Bringing Scotland together and showcasing international connections: The Scottish Dementia Research Consortium and the Brain Health ARC**

Professor Terry Quinn, University of Glasgow

This meeting focused on Scotland's role in advancing dementia research, from fundamental science through to clinical trials, and how the Brain Health ARC is uniting diverse groups across Scotland in this important work.

Professor Frank Gunn-Moore highlighted that £32 billion a year is spent in the UK on dementia care and emphasised the urgent need for researchers to collaborate across disciplinary and institutional boundaries to make a meaningful impact.

Professor Craig Ritchie discussed the work of Scottish Brain Sciences, which is developing the world's largest database and biobank for neurodegenerative disease research.

His team believes that, with early detection, dementia could be preventable within five to ten years, with Scotland positioned to lead in this field.

Professor Terry Quinn explained how the establishment of the Alliance for Research Challenges (ARC) for brain health is fostering cross-sector and multidisciplinary collaborations to make Scotland the prime destination for brain health research



**20 February 2024**

**Scotland's Healthcare Data: A national asset?**

Professor George Crooks, CEO, The Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre (DHI); and William Kendall, Product Manager, DHI

**Unlocking data to save time, money, and lives**

Professor Roger Halliday, CEO, Research Data Scotland

The discussion highlighted the essential role of healthcare data in understanding ill-health, supporting research, and showcasing the real-world value and effectiveness of health technology innovations, treatments, and clinical pathways.

The partnership behind the AIM4ALL project explained how digital innovation and secure access to health data can unlock value, benefit patients, and support clinicians, while simultaneously driving research and generating

health and economic benefits for Scotland. The presentation featured a short video by Dr David Irvine, a consultant haematologist based in Glasgow, who explained the importance of accessible and equitable access to advanced therapeutics, and the crucial role data plays in achieving this.

Professor Roger Halliday highlighted the vital importance of data availability for research within the life sciences sector and its broader impact on health and wellbeing. In his presentation, he addressed the challenges of ensuring safe access to data for research and outlined how Research Data Scotland's transformation programme aims to deliver fast, trustworthy data access for research. This work continues with the rollout of a new Researcher Access Service.



## The Meetings 2024

**21 May 2024**

### **Cross-Party Group AGM**

#### **The Journey from MMIC Oligos to OMICE Facility: Plans, Collaborations, and Building an Ecosystem**

John Arthur, Director, and Barrie Cassey, Technical Director, the Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (MMIC)

#### **15 Years of Coordinating and Promoting Marine Science: A Scottish Perspective, and Sea Mammal Research: Informing Evidence-Based Decisions**

Professor David Paterson Executive Director, the Marine Alliance for Science & Technology Scotland and  
Dr Debbie Russell, Deputy Director, Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews

Following the AGM of the Cross-Party Group, John Arthur presented an overview of the opportunities oligonucleotide manufacturing offers for patient care and the Scottish economy. He explained that oligonucleotide-based medicines can bind to mRNA to prevent specific genes from triggering disease, with the potential to provide precision therapies for certain conditions. He also outlined the manufacturing and supply chain challenges the UK faces, including material shortages and a skills gap within the industry.

Professor David Paterson described how the Marine Alliance for Science & Technology for Scotland (MASTS) is uniting universities and researchers, which he and his colleagues see

as the only effective way for Scotland to address emerging issues such as climate change and marine pollution.

Dr Debbie Russell shared a brief history and current work of the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU), originally established to advise the UK and Scottish Governments on statutory seal management. She highlighted steps being taken to sustain funding for SMRU's work by offering research expertise to partners worldwide.



**17 September 2024**

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

Professor Alastair Florence University of Strathclyde and Director, CMAC

#### **Manufacturing Gene Therapies**

Ian McCubbin CBE Chairman, RoslinCT

#### **Advancing vaccines for better lives**

Greig Rooney

Managing Director, Valneva Scotland

Scotland's advances in medicine and vaccine manufacturing took centre stage in this session.

Professor Alastair Florence presented the work of CMAC, which is at the heart of extensive national and international collaborations. He shared that Glasgow now boasts world-class infrastructure to support the pharmaceutical industry, with CMAC focused on sustainable manufacturing process innovation, enhanced by predictive modelling.

Ian McCubbin showcased RoslinCT, a company primarily

based at the Edinburgh BioQuarter, now expanding with a new facility in Boston, Massachusetts. He highlighted that the Edinburgh site is creating the world's first CRISPR gene-editing-derived medicine, CASGEVY, a one-time treatment for sickle cell disease and beta-thalassemia.

Greig Rooney then provided an overview of Valneva's operations in Scotland, including its new Almeida facility in Livingston, now positioning Valneva as the country's largest vaccine producer. He noted that over 650,000 people

in the UK have been immunised with Valneva vaccines since 2017 and shared the company's goal of becoming Scotland's top workplace in the life sciences sector.



## Thank you to the following organisations for their continued support for the Cross-Party Group

3D Communications	Heriott-Watt University	Realise Solutions
AbbVie	Highlands & Islands Enterprise	Research Data Scotland
Accenture	Hologic	Roche
Amarin	Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre	RoslinCT
Amgen	InnoScot Health	Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow
Antibody Analytics	Intercept	Royal Pharmaceutical Society
AstraZeneca	Interface Knowledge Connection	Scottish Brain Sciences
AXIS Consulting	Intuitive Surgical	Scottish Enterprise
Bayer	Ipsen	Scottish Government
BioAscent	IQVIA	Scottish Lifesciences Association
BioCity	Johnson & Johnson	Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service
Biogen	Kidney Research UK Scotland	Scottish Schools Education Research Centre
Blue Yonder	Kyowa Kirin	Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA)
Boehringer Ingelheim	Map Bio Pharma	Skills Development Scotland
Bristol-Myers Squibb	Marine Alliance for Science & Technology for Scotland	Teva UK
Burness Paull	Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre	The Alliance Scotland
Cancer Research UK	Medtronic	The Association of British HealthTech Industries
Canopus Scotland	Merz Pharma	The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult	Moredun Research Institute	The Church of Scotland
Charles River	MS Society	The Chief Scientist Office
Chiesi	MSD	The Data Lab
CMAC	Mydex	Toshiba Medical Visualization Systems Europe
Community Pharmacy Scotland	NHS Research Scotland	UCB
Daiichi Sankyo	NHS Scotland	University of Dundee
Department of International Trade	NovaBiotics	University of Edinburgh
Diabetes UK	Novartis	University of Glasgow
Eli Lilly	ODX Innovations	University of St Andrews
Epidarex	Omega Diagnostics	University of Strathclyde
Ettrickburn	Orion	University of the West of Scotland
Exact Sciences	Pfizer	Valneva
Fraser of Allander Institute	Pharmaceutical Product Development	
Genetic Alliance	Prospect	
GSK		
Healthcare News Scotland		
Healthcare Public Affairs		

### Contacting the secretariat

The choice of what we focus on at Cross-Party Group meetings is down to everyone who gets involved. We would encourage you to get in touch with the Secretariat to put forward ideas for future meetings.

The secretariat of the Cross-Party Group is provided by ABPI Scotland.

**Claire Headspeath, Operations Manager,  
ABPI Scotland**

[cheadspeath@abpi.org.uk](mailto:cheadspeath@abpi.org.uk) 0131 523 0497