

Government injects funding boost for cutting-edge vaccine site in Darlington

- Government's Vaccine Taskforce has granted £10.65 million in additional funding to support the launch of Darlington RNA vaccine innovation centre
- the 'RNA Centre of Excellence', hosted by technology innovation organisation CPI, will support the development, scale-up and manufacture of new RNA therapies and vaccines, the same technology used for the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccinations
- CPI has also established an RNA Training Academy, to support companies by providing the industry with the skills required in RNA technology

The government has today (Friday 7 October) announced £10.65 million in funding to boost the development of RNA technology, the vaccine innovation that protected millions around the world from COVID-19. The funding will support the launch of a new innovation centre by CPI in Darlington, advancing the technology that is currently under development for the treatment of various cancers, flu vaccines and personalised medicines including gene therapy.

The Vaccine Taskforce granted the funding – administered by Innovate UK – for CPI's RNA Centre of Excellence, which has the potential to make homegrown breakthroughs in the fight against a number of diseases, producing RNA material for clinical trials which will be crucial to future vaccine development.

The Centre is the only site in the UK currently able to develop and manufacture messenger and self-amplifying RNA vaccines and therapies with the capability to manufacture millions of doses of a vaccine, if required for a future healthcare emergency.

It will provide state-of-the-art equipment and world-leading expertise to support industry with the testing, scale-up and clinical production of RNA technologies – showcasing the UK's capability in this area and helping to promote the UK as an attractive destination for further investment.

Minister for Science and Investment Security Nusrat Ghani said:

The UK's exceptional capabilities in Life Sciences were showcased on the world stage when we became the first nation globally to approve a working COVID-19 vaccine during the pandemic.

We are now committed to boosting these capabilities even further, ensuring we are thoroughly prepared for future health emergencies and remaining at the forefront of the development of new therapies.

This is why we are making this significant investment in CPI's brilliant RNA facility in Darlington, a site with the potential to make enormous homegrown breakthroughs in the fight against disease.

The Centre will also form an important part of the UK's commitment to future pandemic preparedness, as the government will retain priority access to the facility for up to 10 years. This will allow vaccine developers to utilise the site as required to provide additional manufacturing capacity in the event of a future health emergency or pandemic.

As part of the Centre, CPI has also established the RNA Training Academy, providing interactive courses in RNA technology alongside bespoke training at CPI facilities to ensure that companies can access the industry skills they require in the UK. The Academy has already gained accreditation to provide continuing professional development.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said:

CPI is a fantastic example of a local organisation at the cutting-edge of biosciences and its new Centre of Excellence will be another string to the bow of the growing cluster on Darlington's Central Park and our world-leading life sciences sector.

This latest boost comes on the back of the amazing work of the sector in the fight against coronavirus. This funding will help our scientists make even more leaps forward and breakthroughs, having a huge impact on lives across the UK and beyond. Funding of our research centres, labs and manufacturing space will help create high-quality, highly-skilled and well-paid jobs in the innovative industries of the future for local people.

While we're seeing difficulties across the globe which are making times tough for many, our region continues to move forward and make huge progress thanks to investments like these – meaning the long-term future of Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool is bright.

This funding illustrates the proactive steps the government is taking to realise the 2021 [Life Sciences Vision](#), and to continue furthering its ambitions to secure the UK's reputation as a life sciences superpower. The investment also delivers on the government's levelling up agenda, supporting highly skilled jobs and helping bring greater prosperity and productivity in the north-east region.

The Vaccine Taskforce previously supported the construction and development of CPI's centre with funding of £26.48 million, and to date, the government has invested over £405 million to secure and scale up the UK's vaccine manufacturing capabilities, supporting the UK's ability to respond to future pandemics.

Notes to editors

- Innovate UK is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- The Vaccine Taskforce has now transferred its core functions to the UK Health Security Agency and the Office for Life Sciences

About the CPI

- [CPI](#) is a social enterprise that partners with industry, academia, government, and the investment community to catalyse the delivery of healthcare and sustainability innovations that benefit people, places and our planet
- CPI works with the [pharma industry](#) to develop next-generation medicine manufacturing innovations to deliver tomorrow's vaccines and therapeutics. The organisation offers world-leading facilities and expertise in small molecules, biologics, oligonucleotides, and complex medicines to accelerate drug development and scale-up and offers complementary drug delivery systems like lipid nanoparticles
- it creates agile, efficient, and sustainable supply chains by convening actors across the pharma industry ecosystem in a pre-competitive space and boosting the adoption of industry 4.0 advanced processes and digitisation
- CPI hosts one of the largest pools of experts in RNA manufacturing in the UK. This RNA expertise will be shared with the pharma industry and budding scientists through the [RNA Training Academy](#). Apprentices, technicians, scientists, and executives will be able to access a series of courses on the development and manufacture of RNA, RNA encapsulation, and final formulation. The first course will be delivered on 25 October 2022
- CPI is a founding member of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult, a network of world-leading technology and innovation centres that help business, researchers and government deliver industrial transformation in the UK

Additional quotes

Public Health and Mental Health Minister Dr Caroline Johnson said:

The UK's world-leading clinical research and innovation has been vital in our fight against COVID, giving people across the world the protection they and their loved ones need.

The opening of this new Innovation Centre will provide potentially life-saving therapies and vaccines for thousands of patients, while delivering research into a wide range of potentially ground-breaking treatments cementing the UK's status as a life sciences superpower.

Innovate UK CEO Indro Mukerjee said:

Innovate UK has been proud to actively support the UK's pioneering vaccine development and manufacturing. We are pleased to have partnered with the Vaccine Taskforce and to use catapults and expert resources across the Innovate UK system to support their work.

Frank Millar, CEO of CPI said:

CPI played a key role in the development and scale-up of COVID-19 vaccine technology as part of the government's Vaccine Taskforce. As a founding member of the UK's High Value Manufacturing Catapult, we act as a catalyst for delivering healthcare and sustainability innovations and transformation across industries.

Thanks to the successes of our partnership with the VTF, our new RNA Centre of Excellence and Training Academy in Darlington will support industry through world-leading skills developments and the delivery of complex medicines to fight the next healthcare emergency and benefit patients through novel treatment options.

We're delighted to be enabling UK Life Sciences to acquire new capabilities from Teesside, building on the region's long history of biomanufacturing.