

Government to provide shot in the arm for West Midlands vaccine manufacturing facility

- Government grant of £15.9 million awarded to chemical producer Croda to increase the UK's capacity to manufacture key vaccine ingredients
- expanded Staffordshire facility will produce lipids for around 3 billion vaccine doses from 2023
- lipids are an essential component in COVID vaccines as well as other gene therapies

A grant of £15.9 million has been awarded to chemical producer Croda International Plc ('Croda') to increase the UK's manufacturing capacity of specialty lipids, an essential ingredient in mRNA vaccines, the government has announced today.

This investment will enable Croda, a global market leader in the field, to significantly increase production capacity at its facility in Leek, Staffordshire.

This will also allow them to increase both the range and volume of lipids it is able to produce in the UK, – particularly the mRNA lipid used in a number of Covid vaccines – as well as creating a number of jobs at the site.

mRNA has played a crucial role in our current COVID-19 vaccine programme – notably the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines – and has the potential to play a transformational role beyond this in future, for products such as flu vaccines as well as other emerging technologies including gene therapies for cancer and heart disease.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The development of mRNA technology has been one of the greatest scientific leaps forward since the start of the pandemic and the potential for its use in future therapies – potentially treating cancer and heart disease – is remarkable.

I am therefore extremely pleased to announce this support for Croda, a market leader in the manufacture of essential mRNA components, and the only manufacturer of lipids currently operating in the UK.

Not only will this funding provide a significant boost to Britain's life sciences industry, enabling the production of an extra 3 billion vaccine doses domestically, but it also represents an important investment into the West Midlands' economy as we work to onshore manufacturing to the UK.

From 2023, the expanded facility will be able to produce a sufficient volume of lipids for around 3 billion vaccine doses – an estimate based on the volume of lipids required to produce existing COVID-19 vaccines – a significant contribution to global lipid supply and future vaccine production. This will increase both UK and global resilience not only to COVID-19, but also for future health emergencies.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The mRNA technology produced at this site has the potential to unlock the next generation of cutting-edge treatments for existing and new health threats.

This significant investment further cements the UK as a world leader of exciting scientific innovations which are improving health outcomes at home and across the world.

During the pandemic, the government's Vaccine Taskforce invested over £380 million to secure and scale up the UK's vaccine manufacturing capabilities to ensure a robust response to COVID-19 and potential future health emergencies, and this investment builds on this already significant commitment.

Today's funding award also marks the launch of the £1.4 billion Global Britain Investment Fund. Announced in last Autumn's Budget, the fund provides grant support to encourage internationally mobile companies to invest in the UK's critical and most innovative industries, covering life sciences, automotive and offshore wind.

This includes an additional £354 million for UK life sciences, including funding for the Vaccine Taskforce to further increase the UK's responsiveness and capability in vaccine production. The government continues to explore further options to strengthen the UK's resilience, including building on the recent success of mRNA vaccine development and manufacturing.

The Global Britain Investment Fund will drive investment in industries where the UK has both natural strengths and geographic spread and represents the government's commitment to deliver on its big priorities. This includes delivering on the levelling up agenda by ensuring high paying jobs are created across all regions of the UK, investing in clean, home-grown renewable energy, and ensuring the UK becomes a science superpower.

Investment Minister Gerry Grimstone said:

The Global Britain Investment Fund will ensure the UK remains at the forefront of cutting-edge innovation, helping secure investments in key sectors that present the greatest economic opportunities.

Today's investment is a perfect example of how the Global Britain Investment Fund will harness the best of the UK life sciences

manufacturing sector to tackle the major challenges we face and level up every corner of the UK.

The funding supports the Vaccine Taskforce's work to secure innovations and opportunities that have emerged during the pandemic as outlined in the 'Living with COVID-19' plan, as well as delivering on the government's Levelling Up agenda, bringing a number of new jobs to the West Midlands, one of the key areas identified as an Innovation Accelerator in this year's Levelling Up White Paper.