

UK government to partner with Clackmannanshire test manufacturer

- UK government signs contract with Clackmannanshire-based firm to ensure the supply of Covid-19 lateral flow tests
- Supply of tests will support government's plan to cautiously ease restrictions by helping to stop the spread of the virus
- New contracts will create hundreds of jobs across the production line and supply chain

A Clackmannanshire-based firm has secured a contract with the UK government to supply rapid lateral flow tests, which will help prevent the virus from spreading and stop outbreaks from taking hold as restrictions are carefully lifted.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has agreed contracts with Omega Diagnostics, headquartered in Alva in Clackmannanshire, and Global Access Diagnostics, based in Thurleigh, to provide manufacturing capacity for up to 200 million tests COVID-19 lateral flow antigen tests which detect positive cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately, breaking chains of transmission.

Around one in three people who have coronavirus do not have symptoms, so to help stop them from unknowingly passing it on, regular rapid testing is essential to find more positive cases and help stop the virus from spreading.

Lateral flow tests are helping children go back to school, keep healthcare staff safe, and making sure businesses can reopen, and including symptomatic and asymptomatic testing programmes, today the government is on track to surpass 100 million tests carried out in the UK.

The contracts are expected to create around 470 additional jobs in total, in Alva in Scotland, Thurleigh in Bedfordshire and more widely across the production line and wider UK supply chain.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This new partnership will help supply essential rapid lateral flow tests to people all over the UK – showing the pivotal role that Scottish expertise is playing in our efforts to stop the spread of the virus.

With one in three people with the virus having no symptoms, regular rapid testing allows us to identify cases we wouldn't otherwise find, preventing further transmission and saving lives.

Working together as one UK, the pandemic response has shown the strength of our Union and the power of our united efforts, and as we build back better, we will continue to champion innovation and

industry across all parts of the United Kingdom.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

It's great news that Clackmannanshire's Omega Diagnostics is to help the UK Government supply lateral flow tests for people right across the United Kingdom. This new contract will help create hundreds of high quality skilled jobs in Scotland.

These test kits are vital to help stop the virus spreading as we start to open up our economy. The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of covid testing for people in Scotland, as well as supplying vaccines for people in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Omega and Global Access Diagnostics will have the capacity to produce approximately 2 million tests per week each by the end of May, helping scale up the government's rapid lateral flow testing programme across the country.

Colin King, CEO of Omega Diagnostics Group plc, said:

We are delighted to deploy our state-of-the-art lateral flow test production facilities in support of the UK Government's COVID-19 testing programme. The collaboration with other UK based IVD companies and DHSC has facilitated the rapid development and manufacturing capability within the UK. We particularly welcome the Government's assistance to secure the specialist machinery needed to dramatically increase the scale of our manufacturing capacity which has allowed us to ensure a ready supply of high quality, reliable British made rapid lateral flow tests. Rapid lateral flow tests are an essential tool for identifying COVID-19 cases where people have no visible symptoms but could still be infectious and continue to spread the virus. We are very proud to be playing our part in the nation's effort to control the spread of Coronavirus by using our production facilities in Scotland.

Omega Diagnostics and Global Access Diagnostics are members of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, a growing coalition of industry scientists and manufacturers, who have come together to secure lateral flow tests and manufacturing capability for the UK.

Professor Chris Molloy, Chair UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, said:

The consortium has been harnessing the power of the UK Diagnostics industry since summer 2020 to significantly contribute to the national effort to ramp up and expand rapid regular testing programmes. We believe, these programmes, alongside vaccine roll-

out, will be key for getting people back to work, education and friends and family.

We have increased manufacturing capacity tenfold, and our member's tests continue to be validated and marketed. We have also started a digital arm comprised of digital solution providers to work with HMG and regulators on new technologies and standards moving forwards.

Numerous bilateral deals have also been agreed between members as a result of industry coming together with intense purpose and leaving competition at the door in order to prioritise the generation of new UK tests and manufacture them at a scale never considered possible.

We would like to take the time now to thank all those suppliers and manufacturers who have contributed their time and resources to this national effort. Our work here lays a strong foundation for how the diagnostics industry as a whole will flourish in the UK to improve our healthcare in the future.