

Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnology reports big profit increase amid work to expand North East base

Pharmaceuticals firm Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies saw a significant leap in revenue and profits as work to double the size of its Teesside operation continues.

The contract manufacturer – which makes the Novavax Covid-19 vaccine at its Billingham site – filed accounts for the year to the end of March 2022 which show operating profits increased from £13.1m to £21.5m as revenues ramped up from £118.7m to £145.2m. Fujifilm, which now employs more than 1,000 people on Teesside, said the performance was down to buoyancy in the mammalian and process development sectors.

In 2021 plans were announced to spend £400m at Billingham in a bid to create the largest multi-modal biopharmaceutical manufacturing site in the UK, creating an additional 350 jobs. The expanded facility is expected to be operational later this year and will bring increases in its gene therapy production, cell culture capacity and microbial fermentation output.

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Fujifilm pointed to continued research and development activity at the Billingham base, including investment in its Apollo technology which is said to reduce cell development times. There was also spending on its SymphonX platform which deals with processing of biologics molecules.

In a section of the accounts focussed on future developments, chief operating officer Paul Found said: “In line with the

strategic commitment to biologic CMO activities, the company is committed to increase its contract process development and manufacturing capabilities, with investment in microbial manufacturing during the year.

“The main focus of this is through the continuation of its microbial and mammalian services, analytical services offering and ongoing increasing process development opportunities. This financial year has seen investment in microbial manufacturing to increase capacity for future years which will enable us to partner our customers in the longer term commercial supply of drug substance. The company is also expanding its offering into the viral gene therapy sector.

“On June 29, 2021 Fujifilm Corporation announced a ¥90bn investment package to accelerate the growth of Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies globally and which will significantly increase manufacturing capacity. As a result of this investment package the company will see a ten-fold increase in its gene therapy production, cell culture capacity will be tripled and microbial fermentation output will be doubled.

“The company’s cell culture expansion will also include cOMP capacity for continuous manufacturing. Process and analytical development capacity will also be strategically added as part of the investment. The expansions are scheduled to begin operating by late 2023 and into 2024.”

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