

Hygiene firm relishes its bright future

New business forms from sanitiser SOS

■ ANDREW GIBBS

PRODUCTION of hand sanitiser for front-line workers in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic has led to the formation of a new company specialising in cleaning and hygiene products.

Healthguard Hygiene Ltd has created the Shield Guard range of sanitising products, manufactured in the UK under strict ISO9001 conditions. The range has been officially certified effective against the coronavirus, one of the first two products in the UK to be officially tested and approved.

Healthguard Hygiene Ltd was born out of the InnuScience Group based in Milton Keynes. Director Nick Winstone said: "We responded to the urgent need to provide protection through hand sanitiser to hundreds of thousands of frontline workers and feel a responsibility to continue to provide these products as Britain slowly emerges from its lockdown. We needed to do this in a way that does not conflict with our mission within InnuScience, hence the launch of the brand of Shield Guard and Healthguard Hygiene."

Shield Guard's hand sanitiser contains 70 per cent alcohol sourced from distilleries in Scotland. The initial range includes hand sanitiser in a quick-drying gel formulation, a surface sanitiser, and a virucidal all purpose degreaser and cleaner.

Healthguard Hygiene, based in Milton Keynes, is creating six new full-time jobs and expects to sell over 20 million units in the coming year. More than 500,000 units



were sold in the first three weeks after the Shield Guard brand's launch.

Following tests in May, the products have been certified ISO EN 14476:2013 and ISO EN 14476A:2019 which confirms that both hand sanitiser and surface cleaner kill SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

Healthguard Hygiene and InnuScience are part of the South African real estate developer Bothongo Group. Head of group marketing Asheen Dayal said: "Our focus is on providing a complete range of disinfection products to eliminate pathogens and support a strong cleaning regime."

"The plan is to continue to develop and produce products to assist customers in the short- to mid-term as well as the post-Covid era, with a view to establishing HealthGuard Hygiene Ltd as a leading UK manufacturer of hygiene and cleaning products within the next three to five years. I am confident that we have the right mix of brand credibility, sales track record and customer service to be a heralded British company."



Director Nick Winstone on the production line of the new hand sanitiser

Test improvement project wins £50,000 funding boost

A BID for funding by a Bedfordshire company for the next stage of a project to improve testing for coronavirus has resulted in a £50,000 grant from Innovate UK.

Life Science Group is working with the University of Bedfordshire to develop a testing method that inactivates the virus as soon as the swab sample is taken from patients. The process renders virus in the samples non-infectious, reducing the risk to workers and increasing the speed at which tests can be done. More facilities will be able to run test samples.

Early validation to determine the effectiveness of the initial formulation has been completed in collaboration with Public Health England. The six-month project will develop the formulation to ensure that the Viral Inactivation Buffer is safe and will validate its use with current viral testing procedures. The project will also investigate how the buffer might stabilise samples and produce more consistent test results.

Dr Robin Maytum, princi-

pal lecturer in biomedical science at the University of Bedfordshire, is the scientific lead on the project. He said: "The development and validation of a Viral Inactivation Buffer is a key aim in improving testing. It should eliminate the risks in handling otherwise potentially infectious samples and reduce the number of false negatives in current testing."

"This will be increasingly important as reliable testing within communities becomes the cornerstone of controlling the spread of the virus."

The project follows a national call from Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency backed by the government, to develop innovative methodologies to help to combat Covid-19.

Life Science Group has been working with PHE since early April to supply tubes for sample collection. Managing director Jenny Murray said: "This next step will make a huge and immediate difference to how testing for Covid-19 is handled in this country and elsewhere."

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