

# Randox aims for Covid-19 bounce after loss of £15m

By Margaret Canning

RANDOX Laboratories expects future trading to benefit from the pandemic following a loss of nearly £15m due to exceptional items.

The Crumlin company, which was appointed to provide Covid-19 tests at the end of March last year under the UK-wide National Testing Programme, said it had been “positively impacted” by the health crisis.

The business, the UK’s largest provider of Covid PCR tests, was selling kits to private customers before its capability was recognised by the Government.

According to results just filed with Companies House, its sales over the 18 months to the end of June last year reached £181m, almost double the previous year’s figures.

The report said the firm recognised the threat from Covid in early 2020 “based on almost 40 years of continued research and development... and quickly developed tests to accurately diagnose the virus”.

Randox, which exports to 145 companies around the world, said the £14.9m loss had been caused by a number of exceptional items totaling £61.5m.



**Company:** Crumlin-based Randox was founded by Dr Peter Fitzgerald in 1982

Provision of nearly £11.3m was made for antibody stock, while there was also a £21.7m exceptional impairment of intangible assets.

Profit went from £20,000 in 2018 to a loss of £14.9m in the 18 months to the end of June 2020.

The focus on Covid-19 meant some of the company’s research and development projects were at risk of delay, which could have impacted on their commercial viability.

“Therefore, the decision has been taken to impair them at this point in time. Similarly, the antibody stock has been provided for,” the accounts said.

A spokesman for Randox told the Belfast Telegraph: “Without those exceptional items, the company accounts reflect both a strong trading position and adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation of £80m, which has been used to increase employee numbers by over 800 and invest further in research and development since the year end.”

Group employee numbers have reached 2,200, the report said.

Randox, the headline sponsor of the Grand National, was founded by Dr Peter Fitzgerald in 1982.

# Fans ‘devastated’ as Odyssey Bowl to close doors

By Christopher Leebody

FANS have been left gutted as a popular Belfast bowling alley has announced it has shut its doors for good.

The Odyssey Bowl — situated within the Odyssey Complex in Belfast’s Titanic Quarter next to the SSE Arena — was the venue for many hours of fun-filled entertainment.

From first dates to family outings, the much-loved bowling alley was a staple of the large complex.

Featuring a full bowling alley, there was also a significant arcade section upstairs, with air hockey tables, snooker and pool tables, as well as a fully licensed restaurant on the site.

Announcing on Insta-



gram, Odyssey Bowl said they have “closed our doors for good.”

“We would like to thank all of our fantastic customers for the memories and the great craic over the years. Thank you for the support and making Odyssey

*The venue is situated within the Odyssey Complex*

Bowl what it was. It’s been an absolute pleasure,” they wrote.

“Our team are very saddened by the news, but we have all made friends for life in our wee Odyssey Bowl family.”

The post prompted outcry on

social media, with one person saying: “My first ever job”.

Nicole added: “You and your jugs of cocktails will always have a special place in my heart. Thanks for the good times.”

One man said he “couldn’t believe it”, while another simply added “devastated”.

A redevelopment of the Odyssey complex was announced back in 2019, with UK cinema giant Cineworld and the bowling alley operator Hollywood Bowl set to open in a £17m development.

It was expected to complete in Spring 2021.

The Odyssey opened in 2000, as a project led by businessman Peter Curistan, and was 50% funded by a £45m grant from the Millennium Commission.

# ‘Perfect storm’ blamed as bill for negligence is £200m in six years

By Lisa Smyth

THE health service in Northern Ireland is facing a barrage of medical negligence cases due to a “perfect storm” of spiralling waiting lists and scandals affecting thousands of people.

A solicitor who specialises in healthcare law made the grim assessment as it emerged clinical and social care negligence has cost cash-strapped health bosses almost £200m in just six years.

According to figures released by the Department of Health, £32.8m was paid out for blunders relating to medical and clinical care in 2019/20.

The largest amount was paid out in 2014/15 — £41.4m, with the smallest bill — £26.6m — accrued in 2015/16.

The figures have highlighted a further significant burden being heaped upon the health service as it faces a £400m shortfall.

Solicitor Patrick Mullarkey said: “This is becoming somewhat of a perfect storm when you take into account waiting lists, Muckamore, the neurology recall, the urology recall.

“When it comes to waiting lists, we have a system which is structurally questionable, people aren’t on waiting lists for the fun of it, they have medical conditions which require care.

“We’re seeing people with a range of conditions, people who have cancer or cardiac problems, and their outcomes are worse because of delays in treatment.

“Those people are justifiably going to ask why this happened to them, it’s a very legitimate question and these cases will end up in court, we’re going to see an awful lot more of that.”

Of the £32.8m paid out in 2019/20, over two thirds was paid in damages.

The remaining amount went

## Clinical and social care negligence payouts in the last six years:



towards legal costs. However, Mr Mullarkey said this could be reduced if health trusts did not force patients and their families to prove that they have come to harm as a result of failings: “When mistakes are made, the health service doesn’t come forward and hold its hands up and apologise.

“A large proportion of legal fees goes on paying medical experts to write reports and then for their time giving evidence in court.

“When people come to see me, the first thing they say is they want an explanation and the second is they want an apology.

“It is only then that they talk

about compensation and they’re more than entitled to this because of losses they have suffered.

“These cases ruin people’s lives, they break up marriages, there are no winners in this and receiving compensation isn’t winning the lottery.

“I can tell you that every single penny paid out in compensation is deserved, it goes to people who live with the consequences of errors, such as to children who have been brain damaged to help them live their shortened lives and their parents who live with the consequences every single day for the rest of their lives.”

Alliance MLA Paula Bradshaw,

a member of the Stormont health committee, said it is essential that more is done to protect patients and ensure the health service budget is not diverted away from the system.

“The most striking aspect of these figures is that the broad upwards trend in cases and payouts, however slight, continues across the trusts taken collectively,” she said.

“The fact that no trust demonstrates an evident marked downwards trend suggests that there is still an obvious lack of improvement, which raises questions over how such cases are addressed and why learning from them appears to be so limited.”



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*‘These cases ruin people’s lives’*