

GROUNDBREAKING CORONAVIRUS DETECTOR TRIALLED AT TEESSIDE AIRPORT

A new system being developed to detect coronavirus in the air has today (23 June) been installed at Teesside International Airport as part of a new trial.

Local firm Kromek, which produces radiation detection technology for the medical, nuclear and security sectors, has now created a biological threat detection system that can identify trace levels of all COVID-19 within 30 minutes.

It works by drawing large volumes of air – 400 litres per minute – in areas such as airport lobbies and self-selects the biological content, which is then put through an accurate, analytical process to determine the presence or absence of the virus down to very low levels.

By sensing the virus particles even before individuals show symptoms, it can reduce exposure to the disease and limit the spread of localised outbreaks.

The system, designed for high footfall areas like airports, entertainment venues, shops and hospitals, will stay in place at the airport for three days. It is the latest example of how Teesside International is putting the safety and health of local people first, following the launch of a coronavirus testing facility at the airport.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said: “Kromek is a ground-breaking company that has adapted what it does best to develop this system in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. “We’re delighted Teesside is not just one of the first airports, but one of the first buildings, to be trialling this new detector, which could be a real game-changer. Since day one of the pandemic, the airport has put the health and wellbeing of people across Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool at the front of everything we’ve done, and with this pilot we can play our part in helping to protecting the health of thousands of others.

“Although the past year has been difficult, businesses and individuals across our region have been making massive progress in the fight against the disease, like Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies, which is manufacturing the Novavax vaccine right here in Billingham. “This partnership between the airport and Kromek is once again showing that our region is leading the way not just in helping to tackle coronavirus, but in innovation, collaboration and production.”

Dr Arnab Basu MBE DL, CEO of Kromek Group plc, said: “We are proud to be conducting this pilot exercise in Teesside International Airport as part of wider trials of this world-first technology. As a North East-based firm, it’s encouraging to work with a forward-thinking international transport hub right on our doorstep, which is working tirelessly under the stewardship of Mayor Houchen to deliver real benefit to the region.

“The device we are trialling is the only technology of its kind which can autonomously detect the presence of COVID-19 from huge areas. The technology has the capacity to deliver near real time monitoring of the presence and prevalence of the virus, enabling a return to normal life.”

Under a contract with the US Department of Defence, Kromek is also developing a wide-area airborne pathogen detection system which would detect all known, novel and mutating bacterias and viruses. This system is being designed to run autonomously and report the results over a network which would be ideally suited to be used as an early warning system for emerging threats.