

Welcome to our latest update on progress towards the replacement of Fort William's Belford Hospital.

Last month, we reported that our staff had held a crosscheck workshop to start to finalise the service model for the new hospital, and this month we were delighted to be able to present the outcome of that process to the Lochaber community at a public drop-in session, kindly hosted by the Nevis Centre on the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

The service model has been developed with our local teams through a series of workshops, grouped by department, and the event was an opportunity for people to see a summary of each department's vision for the future of their service. Attendees could read about what will be different and why, speak directly to the local staff who will deliver these services about what this will mean and get answers to any questions.

Thanks must go to the Lochaber Community Stakeholder Group who volunteered their time to assist us in explaining the process so far and provide attendees with an additional route to highlight any concerns to raise with us as the project moves forward.

We were delighted that over a hundred people gave up at least part of a beautifully sunny afternoon to attend the event and speak to us.

Feedback was very positive and people particularly appreciated the opportunity to be able to ask questions on a one-to-one basis although this did make the room a little noisy at times! Attendees generally reported feeling pleased that all services currently provided locally would be retained, and a number of comments were left to say that the whole event made the replacement hospital project seem much more real. Plans to deliver more services locally and prevent unnecessary travel to Inverness, especially for short appointments and treatments, were welcomed and there were several comments supporting the improved proposals for ante-natal care specifically.

Some common concerns were raised around recruitment and social care provision and what services will be available in the future. We recognise that the community need more clarity on what will be available within both the hospital and the community and we will be providing this detail at future events and in further Lochaber Times articles as it's available.

In terms of recruitment, we acknowledge that this is a challenge across Highland and is particularly exacerbated by accommodation shortages. Staff are now working on how the new services will impact the workforce requirements, and once we have a clearer understanding of which type of staff and how many we will need in future we can work towards planning how to achieve that, through recruitment, additional training or both. We already work with the HIE-led 'Love Lochaber' campaign and we can learn lessons too from the recent 'Aim High, Aim Highland' campaign which successfully supported recruitment for the National Treatment Centre in Inverness.

The service model has so far focussed mostly on hospital-based (acute) services, however over the coming months we will be doing further work to understand how services as a whole can be improved and realigned across community-based services, primary care and social care, with a view to supporting people to lead healthier lives at home for longer.

The posters from the event are now available to view on our website, which you can find by searching for 'Lochaber Redesign' on the NHS Highland homepage, and hard copies are also available at the Belford Hospital and in Fort William, Caol and Mallaig libraries. We would like to clarify that our proposed timeline for construction starting in 2025 and a new hospital opening in 2028 is dependent on funding being available in 2025. The project is not included in Scottish Government's capital plan until 2026, but we are hopeful that slippage elsewhere will allow us to proceed before this.

As ever, we welcome any comments or suggestions you might have: you can contact us via the NHS Highland Feedback team [nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot](mailto:nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot) or 01463 705997, or on our project email address on [nhsh.nhshighlandstatesprojects@nhs.scot](mailto:nhsh.nhshighlandstatesprojects@nhs.scot).