

PE2125/A: End the pause on new NHS building projects and prioritise capital funding for primary care buildings

Scottish Government written submission, 15 January 2025

The Scottish Government is grateful for the opportunity to contribute towards the Committee's consideration of this petition.

The importance of NHS infrastructure in supporting healthcare services and reform is recognised.

The draft 2025-26 Scottish Budget provides additional investment of £139 million for NHS infrastructure. This provides increased core capital funding for NHS Boards and, as a first step to lifting the capital pause, allows work on the replacement of some acute facilities to resume, as well as providing funding to address NHS Boards' priority areas for infrastructure investment.

Despite this additional investment, the capital funding position remains challenging and there remains uncertainty in the longer-term funding position, as we await the outcome of the UK Government's spending review. All due consideration will be given as to which projects are affordable, deliverable and provide best value, following the outcome of that review.

However, we already know that the NHS estate is aging, and it will not be possible replace all facilities as quickly as we might wish to – a position that is not unique to Scotland. It is therefore necessary to prioritise capital investment across the health estate.

To this end, we are already working with all Health Boards to develop a whole-system NHS infrastructure plan. This will consider health infrastructure needs for the whole of Scotland – including within the Primary Care estate – and support continued safe operation of existing facilities, and well as determination of longer-term investment priorities. The first part of this work – to assess immediate investment priorities – is already well underway and, as noted above, will be supported by funding allocated in the 2025-26 Budget.

In the context of a challenging and uncertain capital funding position, NHS whole-system planning is a positive and practical approach. It will inform how we better utilise our existing assets to support reform and improvement and help to determine how strategic investment across the NHS estate can be directed to ensure the greatest impact.

Health and Social Care Finance Directorate