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NHS 70

2018

2017

News

Floods 2015

Social media

 Communications and
 Engagement Team

Picture library

Video library

Useful links

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[Homepage](#) » [News](#) » Building work on schedule for new Cockermouth Hospital

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Posted on Wednesday 24th October 2012

Building work on schedule for new Cockermouth Hospital

Work on the new Cockermouth Community Hospital and Health Centre is on schedule despite the wet summer weather. Doctors are now looking forward to providing improved services for patients when the new facilities open next year.

The developers are now approaching a major milestone, when the roof is installed on the building - also called "topping out". This will ensure the buildings are wind and watertight before the winter sets in, so that no delay is caused by any adverse weather in the coming months.

Gas, electricity and water services are in the process of being connected up to the new buildings which will lead to some disruption in the roads and footpaths outside the two sites in the next few weeks. The contractor is working closely with the utilities providers to ensure that any disruption can be kept to a minimum for residents.

A temporary park has opened at the Cockermouth site for visitors to the hospital, to reduce demand for on-street parking.

The work at Cockermouth is expected to be largely complete in summer 2013 with the new facility fully operational by autumn.

Dr Simon Desert, Clinical Lead, GP Castlegate Surgery said: "At the moment the building work is causing traffic issues, and we do appreciate the patience which neighbours and patients have given while work continues. However, when we do open for business next year there will be car parking for 130 vehicles at the health centre - more than ever before.

"The design principles of the new health centre are built around integrated services - creating a flexible space where GPs, consultants and the wider health and social care teams can work together to provide the best care for patients.

"Previously, consultant clinics were held in Cockermouth. Due to the floods in 2009 the lack of space resulted in a suspension of these services. Now, we are now working with the hospital trust to bring back these services again and the first is a new paediatric clinic which we will start to run this month in the temporary buildings at the hospital site.

"We are working to bring more services closer to home for the patients of Cockermouth.

"The design of the building is integral to the new style of delivering care. Rather than GPs and consultants working individually in rooms along long corridors, we have been able to create more open spaces where we can work collaboratively together. This style of building has been something new for our architects, who are specialists in designing medical buildings.

"The hospital itself will provide a superior environment for patients, providing privacy and dignity for in-patients with all wards en-suite. There will be an improved working environment for the rehabilitation teams and the opportunity for GPs working in collaboration with the acute trust to provide day-case surgery.

"From the moment a patient arrives they will experience a new way - focusing around sharing care with patients.

"The old style reception with the desk as a barrier will be replaced with an open planned working area providing patients with access to their own records; IT points where they can self check-in and make their own future appointments. The area will be designed to provide private reception points where patients can discuss complex, confidential issues in a more private setting.

"Elderly or less able patients have been foremost in our mind in providing a comprehensive health service within an accessible building. This will be a patient centred building."

Robertson Construction NEE Limited are the contractors working on the rebuild of Cockermouth Community Hospital working closely with eLIFT Cumbria, NHS Cumbria's development partner.

Regional Business Development Director for Robertson, Martin Westgate said: "Fitting the roof always marks a major milestone in any project.

"Having endured the unseasonably wet weather of the summer and autumn, we are delighted to have reached this turning point on programme for completion in Summer 2013.

"As our attention now turns to the interior of both medical centres we will continue to work closely with all the partners and staff at NHS Cumbria to ensure the high standard of healthcare at the new builds will offer the town is delivered."

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