

Northern Health and Social Care Trust Board Meeting in Public - Cover Sheet

Subject:	Birch Hill Centre for Mental Health Capital Scheme	Date of Meeting: 26 June 2025		
Prepared By:	Simon Daly, Head of Capital Projects MH			
Approved By:	Alison Renfrew, Assistant Director of Capital Development			
Presented By:	Petra Corr, Director of MHLDCW			
Purpose				
To provide an update on progress with the Birch Hill Centre for Mental Health project, for noting.		Approval		
		Assurance		
		Update		
		Noting	✓	
Strategic Objectives				
Build Northern Partnerships and Integrate Care	Continue to improve Outcomes & Experience	Deliver value by optimising Resources	Nurture our People, Enable our Talent & Build Our Teams	Improve population Health & address health & social care inequalities
•	•		•	•
Risk – please note if links to any principal, corporate or divisional risk				
Corporate Risks	A new build will reduce the ligature related issues and incidents of violence and aggression to a rating of 12 on the Trust Risk Register. Not compliant at present, high rating of 20. A new build may reduce the current inability to secure acute psychiatric beds to a rating of 12 on Trust Risk Register. Not compliant at present, high rating of 25.			
Committees/groups where this item has been presented before				
Executive Team				
Acronyms				
Mental Health, Learning Disability and Community Wellbeing (MHLDCW) Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) Outline Business Case (OBC) Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Health Estates (HE)				
Executive Summary				
Completion of RIBA Stage 3: The ICT issued the Final RIBA Stage 3 report, Core Group members undertook a comprehensive quality review of the submission and, under the guidance of Health Estates, are content to accept it, with minor amendments, as a record of the Stage 3 design as signed by Project Board in November 2024. The Trust are currently working with HE to update the costs for the next addendum submission, based on the ICT costing of the Stage 3 design, the total business case cost including fees, inflation and Optimism bias is approx. £155m. The Trust requested the ICT provide a potential cost saving list across all elements of the design. The ICT, Trust and HE separately completed a RAG rating report of the individual potential cost reductions based on actual feasibility of achieving the potential savings. The Trust and HE subsequently met to agree a position on all items, those which are deemed feasible will be costed by the ICT at the commencement of Stage 4.				

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Where there is a cost saving these may be instructed as Early Warnings and result in a Compensation Event.

Commencement of RIBA Stage 4: The RIBA Design Stage 4 continues to be delayed due to the Trust awaiting on the outcome of the DoH Strategic Investment Committee review on the of Capital Projects. The current accepted programme, based on a Stage 4 commencement of 20th March 2025, shows a completion date of December 2029 followed by a Trust clinical commissioning period. The current delay to the commencement of Stage 4 will result in an updated programme being drafted and agreed.

Enabling Works: The Trust MTC completed a tree thinning and tree clearance exercise at the Birch Hill site boundary and across the site for the new road. Two additional areas of trees, beside Fern House and on the North West entrance of Birch Hill site required an NIE isolation to allow the tree clearance. All have now been cleared. The other enabling projects, Archaeology & mound car park are being developed to tender package stage. The work for the planning application for the junction at Bush Road and the new access road had been reviewed and approved by the Trust on Friday 6 June 2025. The ICT are expected to submit the planning application this month. All of these projects are required to ensure a cleared site for both the new access route and for the construction of the main Birch Hill Project. These enabling works elements cannot commence without funding approval. In order to de-risk the main project it would be beneficial to continue to advance these works. Any delay to these works will only increase their cost to complete.

Mental Health Inpatient Addendum: The Trust are developing responses to final set of queries on the Mental Health Inpatient Addendum received on 8th May 2025. Support is being provided by the Health Estate Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor. It is proposed that they could be completed by the end of June/early July 2025. The Trust continue to await the outcome of the Strategic Investment Committee, as this may have an impact on time, cost and scope, before a resubmission to the Department of Health. Approval of the Addendum is required to secure funding to commence RIBA Stage 4 and the completion of Enabling Works for progression to tender in advance of the Full Business Case.

Minister's Visit: The Health Minister's visit took place on 16 April 2025 (it was initially scheduled for 2 April 2025 but had to be rearranged). This was a positive visit and afforded the minister the opportunity to see the existing accommodation along with the proposals and mock up bedrooms for Birch Hill.

Mr Robin Swann, MP had also recently promoted and raised the issue of the Birch Hill project in the House of Commons advocating that action is required for "The new Birch Hill mental health centre a much-needed, purpose-built facility to provide the very best environment for assessment, treatment and recovery", asking that it "remains high on the agenda of the Department of Health, and for the Executive parties responsible for funding allocations consider the consequences of their decisions and to recognise the critical need for the Birch Hill project".

Design in Mental Health Conference 3 - 4 June 2025: Having been shortlisted for the Mental Health Awards 2025 Project of the year - Future Design, Birch Hill received a 'Highly Commended' award.

Finance: In 2024/25 the project received a total CRL allocation of £1,910,000 of which £1,219,588 was spent and £690,413 was accrued against the ICT final Stage 3 payment and a number of Compensation Events currently being processed.

Decision Log: No new decisions to note.

Issues/Risks: one new risk number 74 has been added to the risk register – The risk that the RIBA Stage 3 feedback given to the ICT is not implemented and actioned throughout the RIBA Stage 4, Trust and HE will continue to review.

The major risk continues to be the ongoing Department of Health SIC review of Capital Projects across all Trusts will extend the programme and the associated costs. Should the review lead to a delay in the

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project the Trust will continue to carry the risks associated with Holywell Hospital which will increase as will the associated costs of maintaining the building.

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