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Health Minister launches £450m South West Hospitals Works Programme

The Western Health and Social Care Trust today welcomed Health Minister Michael McGimpsey on a one day visit to the southwest to launch the programme of works for the areas new hospitals totalling an investment of over £450million.

The visit began in Omagh where the Minister re-iterated his commitment to the new £190 million Omagh Hospital Complex. A sign was unveiled confirming the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital as the site of the new Complex that will provide a new Hospital, Centre for Mental Health and Health and Care Centre on the perimeter of the town. The Minister then travelled to the Erne Hospital where he met with Trust staff as well as local political and community representatives before cutting the first sod at the site of the new £267 million Acute Hospital at Wolf Lough. The new hospital which is planned to open in 2011, will be situated on a 52 acre green field site, situated about one mile north of Enniskillen off the main A32 road to Irvinestown.

Speaking at a reception in the Erne Hospital, Trust Chairman, Mr Gerard Guckian thanked the Minister McGimpsey for the Department's commitment to an investment of over £450 million pounds in the southwest. He said, "This is a very significant day which marks the beginning of the new Western Trust's journey to provide sustainable and fit for purpose healthcare for the 120,000 people of Fermanagh and Tyrone. In less than 5 years time, we will be inviting patients through the door of their new, state-of-the-art, acute hospital. This will bring us into a future that will see the best in acute care delivered for the benefit of patients."

He continued: "Today we are marking a tangible milestone in our journey to open our new hospital. However the project is not about new buildings, it is primarily about patient services. While the Trust is committed to providing top class facilities for patients, staff and visitors that we can be proud of for years to come, our primary aim is to provide an improved model of patient care, offer new services and invest in

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developing our staff. The Acute Hospital and Omagh Hospital Complex, together with Altnagelvin and our regional hospitals are complementary parts of that new model of patient care”.

Outline Planning Approval to build to the New Acute Hospital was received in September 2006, and a contractor is currently on-site to carry out works needed to prepare the site for the construction phase. The Trust is also well into the process of selecting a contractor for the main £267 million contract. The contract, which covers the design, build, finance, maintenance and operation of the new hospital, is being delivered under the government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Three consortia were short listed in November 2006 in the competition for award of the contract. Final tenders will be received in November 2007, and after a three month evaluation, the Trust will announce a 'preferred bidder' early next year.

The Trust also reported that they are delighted with the response to the advertisement for a contractor for the new Hospital Complex in Omagh. Outline Planning Approval is expected for the Omagh project shortly. Once approved, the Trust hopes to begin site preparation works at the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital later this year. The new Omagh Hospital Complex has an opening date of 2011/2.

Concluding on the days events, Mr Guckain said, “While we pay tribute to the hard work and dedication that has resulted in the sustained and accelerated progress for our new hospitals programme over the past three years, we must also look to the future. Much work lies ahead for the Trust in order to safely guide our new Acute and Omagh Hospital projects through to a successful fruition. The Trust looks forward to safely guiding the project across the stepping stones and over the hurdles that will lead us improved health and wellbeing for the population of the south west and Omagh .”

Notes to the Editor.

- The New Acute Hospital for the South West and Omagh Hospital Complex are part of the first of the wave of hospital projects to come forward from the Investment Strategy for NI, lead by the Department of Health, Social Services

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and Public Safety (DHSSPS), and supported by the Strategic Investment Board Ltd. For more information on the SIB including the latest Annual Review and Accounts 2005 visit: www.sibni.org

- Three consortia have been short-listed in the competition to win the contract to provide the New Acute Hospital. The £267 million contract, which covers the design, build, finance, maintenance and operation of the new hospital, is being delivered under the government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The short-listed bidders are consortiums of leading construction and investment firms and each is made up of partnerships of both global and local companies. The final three bidders are Consort Healthcare, DirectHealth and Northern Ireland Health Group. These consortia are progress through the comprehensive competitive dialogue process which will culminate in the submission of fully developed tenders in November, and after a comprehensive and robust evaluation process, in the appointment of one final bidder early next year. Construction work on the new hospital is planned to begin in the Autumn of 2008. However, work has already begun to prepare the site for the new buildings.
- The figures quoted; £267 million for the New Acute Hospital for the South West and £190 million for the Omagh Hospital Complex are the estimated capital costs based on 2011/2 figures.
- PT McWilliams were appointed contractor for the site preparation works for the New Acute Hospital in April. This 50 week works programme includes widening the road at the entrance to the site on the A32 and laying a new roundabout, diverting overhead electricity pylons underground around the periphery of the site, ground re-modelling and conservation measures, The work will be completed by April next year.
- Significant developments have taken place for the Omagh Hospital Complex with an advertisement for a contractor placed in the Official Journal of the European Union in March 2007. Those bidders that have responded to the advertisement will be short-listed on the basis of their capabilities, track record and financial status during the summer.

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