

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

With the site for the new build at Blar Mor agreed, this year will see a number of significant milestones in this important and complex project. In this column we will look at what that will entail over the coming weeks and months.

At the moment we are preparing for the Cross Check Workshop, which is expected to take place in March.

This event, which will be "in-person" rather than online, will mark the culmination of the series of Service Model Workshops that have helped shape our plans so far.

At it, more than a dozen senior staff who lead departments delivering the range of health services provided in the area will present their visions for services to be delivered from the new hospital for review by their clinical colleagues.

This will be followed by an event where members of the public and stakeholders can learn about the results of the workshop, ask any questions they have and give their own views, which will be taken into account in the ongoing planning and design process.

The date and venue for this event is still to be confirmed, but further information on it will appear in a future column.

March is also expected see one of the most important milestones to date in the project, with the appointment of the Principal Supply Chain Partner (PSCP) for the design and construction of the new Belford Hospital.

A tendering exercise is currently being carried out to select the contractor, and an announcement will be made following their appointment.

Once we have the PSCP and design team in place, work on a concept design for the new hospital building and site will get underway. Once this is agreed, the next stage will involve producing further detailed designs.

Everyone in Lochaber is keen to see what the new Belford Hospital will look like and we hope to be able to start sharing the first images in the late summer or early autumn.

Work on the detailed designs will continue through the last months of this year and into 2024.

As you can see, a great deal of progress towards developing the new Belford Hospital is expected to be made during 2023.

All the work is currently on track and we are confident it will continue to progress steadily throughout the year.

It will see us make significant progress towards our goal of developing a new Rural General Hospital in Fort William, serving the Lochaber area and further afield, providing a fuller range of services than the current Belford.

We will continue, through this column, to keep you updated on the progress of this project throughout the year. As ever, we also welcome any comments or suggestions you might have: you can contact us via the NHS Highland Feedback team

Nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot or **01463 705997**, or our project email address on nhsh.nhshighlandestatesprojects@nhs.scot.