



### **NHS Highland column - March 2025**

NHS Highland is pleased to confirm we will be re-starting our monthly columns in the Lochaber Times.

These columns are an ideal way to help keep you informed on what is happening with the Lochaber health and social care redesign, including the replacement hospital on the Blàr Mòr.

We received positive news in December regarding the funding from the Scottish Government to enable us to continue the development work on the new hospital. This means we can formally restart the project with our Principal Supply Chain Partner Balfour Beatty in April. As a Board we have already been working to remobilise and recommence the work required throughout February and March.

We are now just reviewing the project timescales to allow for people to become available from their current projects and to consider the work which has been done to date.

Our current timescales are to submit the Outline Business Case in May 2026, the Full Business Case in July 2027 and for construction to begin in October 2027.

We recently met with the community stakeholder group and explained that we recognise these timescales are longer than originally anticipated, and we will aim to improve upon them where possible. The most important thing is to ensure we end up with a hospital that is fit for now and the future.

The total project cost as outlined in the Initial Agreement is £137.7million. This figure will be subject to review as we remobilise, however it reflects our commitment to investing in Lochaber and our remote and rural communities.

A significant part of our vision for health and social care in the future is community health and social care, and the provision of care in people's homes, in care homes and care at home services in Lochaber.

There has been positive community engagement surrounding the future of Moss Park care home, and we continue to work closely with The Highland Council and HC-One to put in place all practical arrangements to enable a seamless transition for us to take responsibly for the operation of the service from 1 April 2025.

We recognise the crucial role the community played in helping secure the future of the new hospital and the care home, and I want to thank everyone for their efforts.

It is important we continue to work in partnership to develop local health and social care services, and I'm delighted to report that while there has been a pause on the work surrounding the new hospital, the work involved in the wider community redesign continues to gather pace.

We reported in January last year that the focus of our redesign work in community and acute services would be on five key areas:

- **Living Well/Waiting Well**  
This will examine prevention activities to enable people to stay health and independently at home.
- **Care and Support**  
This will look at how our community teams work with increasing flexibility and make more use of technology to support people in their homes.
- **Single Point of Access Service**  
This will review how we will ensure citizens can easily access the services they require in a timely manner.
- **Frailty Service**  
This will examine how we enhance person centred care and reduce falls at home.
- **Immediate Care Service**  
Lastly, this will look at how we improve the delivery of intermediate care services and better integrate with partners like Highland Council.

This work is aligned to the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership Joint Strategic Plan, and we have been engaging with people and organisations across Lochaber as the project has developed.

Managing health and social care services in the current climate is complex and challenging, but as we are beginning to enjoy the early days of spring, it feels like there is renewed growth in the project. The new hospital project and the re-opening of the Mackintosh Centre in Mallaig have added real impetus and positivity locally, and we want to build on that.

Pleased be assured that all of our teams are dedicated to providing the best services possible, and we are working hard behind the scenes to strengthen and improve health and social care services in Lochaber.

**Louise Bussell**

*NHS Highland Nurse Director*

*Senior Responsible Officer for Lochaber Health and Social Care Redesign*