

12th June 2019

Statement of Fred Barry, Chair, National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health 12th June 2019.

Introduction

Dear Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting us here this morning to up-date you on the progress of the work being carried out at the new Children's Hospital. I am joined here today by Dr Emma Curtis, Medical Director, NPHDB.

Background

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board was appointed in August 2013 to design, build and equip a new children's hospital. A planning application was lodged in August 2015 and An Bord Pleánála granted planning permission in April 2016 for the new children's hospital, the paediatric outpatients and urgent care centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals and related developments including the Children's Research and Innovation Centre (CRIC) and a family accommodation unit adjacent to the new children's hospital.

Development Board

If I may start with developments relating to the Development Board itself, you may recall that my last appearance in front of the committee was preliminary to my appointment as its new Chairman. The Minister for Health subsequently confirmed my appointment. Two Board Members have since resigned having given great service for six years. The appointment of new members is within the remit of the Minister for Health and we are working together to fill these positions.

There have also been resignations by executive personnel, including the Project Director. An open competition is underway for a new Chief Officer. An interim Chief Officer and an interim Project Director have been appointed in the meantime.

Progress on the Project

The Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly is the most advanced element of the work. Construction work is now substantially complete, and the building was handed over to Children's Health Ireland in May 2019. Services will commence in the new building once the usual commissioning activities are completed. This will be a very significant milestone in the delivery of suitable treatment centres for our children.

Good progress is also being made on the new Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Tallaght. The decant works are already complete, and the new creche, changing facility and offices are open. Construction of the foundations for the Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre building itself started earlier this year and the new building has reached first floor level.

The new children's hospital on the St. James's site is by far the biggest element of the project.

The Committee will be very aware that the construction costs for these works, as finally agreed with the Main Contractor BAM, are considerably higher than the previously estimated costs.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in reaching agreement with BAM, the view of the Development Board was that it was better to proceed with BAM rather than stop the project and retender the main construction work. We could have retendered the contract, but it would have added years of delay, and between tendering costs, inflation, increased owner's costs, and mobilisation costs the likelihood was that retendering would ultimately result in higher project costs rather than lower. Accordingly, the Board recommended to the relevant stakeholders that the construction should proceed on the basis agreed with the Main Contractor, BAM.

The Government authorised the Development Board to proceed with the main construction works at the end of last year.

Another significant development is that it has been decided to procure employer supplied health technology equipment through traditional procurement means rather than a Managed Equipment Service. This decision is timely in that it allows competitive tendering, procurement and delivery of this equipment in line with the overall programme.

The construction focus for the last year or so has been on heavy civil works excavating the site, pile driving, and so on- and the building frame is now under construction. This frame can be seen above ground level in places, and as it rises it will give a real sense of the scale of the works. And, the mechanical and electrical installation work has started in the basement. The next construction milestone will be when the completion of the new access road loop around the site perimeter, allowing the excavation of the strip of road currently running east-west through the building site. This will be visible later this year. Drone footage from the site taken at the end of May can be viewed via the attached link <http://www.newchildrenshospital.ie/campus-vision/drone-footage-of-nch-site-may-2019/>

Thank you for your attention, Chairman and Committee Members.