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Media Release

Trust makes strides towards sustainability

Over the past year the Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving sustainability and reducing carbon emissions which have a damaging impact on the environment.

Cara Charles-Barks, Chief Executive of the Royal United Hospitals Bath, said: “Climate change poses a major threat to our health as well as our planet. The environment is changing and this has direct and immediate consequences for our patients, the public and the wider NHS.

“Over the past year, despite the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve made great progress in reducing our impact on the environment, reducing our carbon emissions from gas and electricity by around 14% and ensure we as a Trust are fit for the future.”

To act as a reminder of why it is so important to take action, the RUH has launched an art competition inviting children and young people to submit artwork on the theme of a healthy planet. The artwork will be displayed across the Trust as a reminder for staff, patients and visitors of the importance of taking action against climate change to protect future generations.

The competition is run in partnership with Art at the Heart, the Trust’s art charity, and the Schools Climate Network. Any child or young person who would like to enter should create their artwork on A4 paper and submit a photograph of it to ruh-tr.sustainabilityteam@nhs.net by 21 January 2022.

An Energy Manger, a Net Zero Carbon Apprentice and over 90 Sustainability Champions, members of staff who have volunteered to support the cause, have been recruited to help

the RUH achieve its environmental goals and drive forward change. Other achievements include:

Reducing the impact of anaesthetic gases

Across the NHS, anaesthetic gases are commonly used as a part of everyday surgeries. These gases alone are responsible for over 2% of all NHS emissions.

The RUH is addressing this by first focusing on Nitrous Oxide, as it has a higher global warming potential than the other gases used. A taskforce is in the process of being set up to analyse the use of Nitrous Oxide and find ways to reduce the use and wastage of the gas.

Enhancing the natural environment

The RUH is located on a 52 acre site. Where possible we have introduced things to enhance our green spaces and protect wildlife for example:

- To improve biodiversity on the site, we have created a bug hotel and wildflower garden in one of our green spaces with plans for more to follow.
- To mark COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in autumn this year, 26 trees were planted on site as a reminder of the commitments made and the role that everyone can play in making a difference.

We also have plans to enhance the forest areas on the site by landscaping and planting edible flora to create a space for the benefit of staff, patients, visitors and wildlife for years to come.

Encouraging sustainable travel

Travel and logistics make up 14% of the NHS carbon footprint. At the RUH steps have been taken to offer both patients and staff more sustainable modes of transport. This has included:

- Doubling the secure cycle storage space on-site
- Introducing electric fleet vehicles with one already in operation and plans for two more shortly
- Encouraging people who would normally drive to work to consider alternative options by introducing an eBike scheme for staff
- We be introducing a salary sacrifice scheme for staff enabling them to lease electric vehicles at a reduced rate in early 2022.

We have also been supporting Bath and North East Somerset Council with the Clean Air Zone to improve the air quality in Bath with our 'switch off when you drop off' campaign to improve air quality on site by encouraging people to turn their engines off when stationary.

"We're very proud of all the initiatives we've introduced last year but we know we can go even further in 2022 and we're excited to deliver on more of the ambitious targets set out in our Carbon Reduction Strategy" said Ruth McNab, Sustainability Manager at the Royal United Hospitals Bath.

Find out more about sustainability at the RUH on our website:
www.ruh.nhs.uk/get_involved/sustainability.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust provides acute treatment and care for a catchment population of around 500,000 people in Bath, and the surrounding towns and villages in North East Somerset and Western Wiltshire. The hospital provides healthcare to the population served by four Clinical Commissioning Groups: Bath & North East Somerset CCG, Wiltshire CCG, Somerset CCG and South Gloucestershire CCG.

The Trust provides 759 beds and a comprehensive range of acute services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

In 2015 The Royal United Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust acquired the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) NHS Foundation Trust. The RNHRD treats patients from across the country offering services in rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME, cancer related fatigue and fatigue linked to other long term conditions such as multiple sclerosis.

The RUH is changing - we have an exciting programme of redevelopment underway transforming our site and further improving the services we provide. The Trust has opened the purpose-built RNHRD and Brownsword Therapies Centre and is now working towards the new Dyson Cancer Centre. For more details visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk/about/fit_for_the_future

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk