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Communications Department

Royal United Hospital
Combe Park
Bath
BA1 3NG

Tel: 01225 826230 / 821459
Mobile: 07557 756658 (office hours)

ruh-tr.communicationsteam@nhs.net
www.ruh.nhs.uk
www.twitter.com/RUHBath

Media Release

Green light given to increase NHS patient capacity at Sulis Hospital, Bath

Sulis Hospital, Bath will soon be able to perform an additional 3,750 non-emergency, orthopaedic operations for NHS patients each year, following a successful planning application submitted by Royal United Hospital, Bath.

The plans, which were approved by B&NES Council on Wednesday 6 March, will see a new wing built at Sulis Hospital, a fully operational independent hospital owned by the RUH that treats both NHS and private patients. The RUH acquired the former Circle Bath hospital in June 2021, with the main objective of securing additional elective capacity for NHS patients in Bath and the South West.

Situated at Sulis Hospital in Peasedown St John, just outside of Bath, the new Sulis Elective Orthopaedic Centre (SEOC) will act as an NHS elective surgery hub; it will serve NHS patients from across the South West, helping to tackle the region's backlog of elective, non-emergency surgery. It will also create up to 100 new jobs for the area.

The new development, which has secured £25m in national NHS funding, will be a centre of excellence, working to national best-practice standards and providing high-quality care. The plans include:

- Two additional modular theatres
- Additional inpatient capacity
- Seven extra day case pods
- Conversion of two existing theatres to laminar flow theatres, providing a work area with sterile conditions and the very highest standards of cleanliness.

Surgery at the site will be protected from disruption and cancellations caused by surges in emergency hospital admissions because Sulis does not have an emergency department. This means that the SEOC will enhance the resilience of services into the future.

Around 60% of capacity will be used to carry out elective orthopaedic procedures that would otherwise be managed at the RUH's main Combe Park site, with the remaining 40% available to support the wider region's NHS elective recovery programme and future growth in demand projected to arise from the ageing population in Bath and the South West.

Cara Charles-Barks, RUH Chief Executive, said: "This is a landmark step forward in our Trust strategy, which sets out our plans to develop and transform our services in response to current healthcare challenges.

"This will have a hugely positive impact on the people we care for across BaNES, Swindon, Wiltshire and the wider region and I am looking forward to seeing the project break ground."

Simon Milner, Hospital Director Sulis Hospital, comments: "This milestone enables us to continue offering exceptional healthcare to the wider community. Over the next six months, recruitment will play a pivotal role as we expand our clinical teams and support services. Our agile approach means we can meet the growing demand for NHS healthcare whilst maintaining and growing our private practice. Continuous investment in facilities and technology ensures high standards of patient-centred care."

Gill May, Chief Nurse, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, said: "Our teams on the frontline, along with those working equally hard behind-the-scenes, are committed to ensuring that local people can get the care they need as quickly as possible, and the addition of this new centre will not only support them to do exactly that, but also help to offset some of the unfortunate delays that have been caused in recent times by the pandemic, industrial action and general increases in demand."

Construction on SEOC will be completed in late 2024.

For more information, please contact ruh-tr.communicationteam@nhs.net

Ends

Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we're proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

We're currently building a new Cancer Centre at the RUH. The Dyson Cancer Centre, which is set to open in spring 2024, will help transform the care we provide for patients, families and carers.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

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

About Sulis

Annually, over 5500 NHS elective surgical procedures performed across 14 different specialities. (Data Last 12 Months – Start Feb 2023 – end Jan 2024).

Since April-23 over 400 cases have been completed through the RUH's additional modular theatre (erected at Sulis Hospital), which utilises Sulis Hospital's ward for patient recovery. This initiative enables RUH to continue elective Orthopaedic surgery throughout Winter pressures and supports lowering wait list pressures.

Since September 2021 there have been over 1500 elective care pathways (patients) transferred to Sulis from over 15 different NHS Trusts and Independent organisations in the SouthWest. This is called an Inter-Provider Transfer under the Mutual Aid Initiatives (DMAS/PIDMAS).

More recently - 130 T&O patient pathways asked to be supported since August 2023 from as far away as the Cornwall Trust (RCHT).

CDC Programme (Data April 1st 2023 to End of Jan 2024):

- o Over 8000 additional NHS patients for Radiology Investigations (Xray, Ultrasound, MRI and CT)
- o Over 300 additional Endoscopy diagnostic examinations.
- o New service recently started to enable direct GP to Cardiology diagnostic tests on NHS pathway. Currently completed 30 echocardiograms in the last two months, set to double by end of March. Procedures include Echocardiograms, ECG monitoring and Blood Pressure monitoring.
- o New local NHS Pathology Clinic set up to enable patients to obtain their blood tests out of hours and on Saturdays rather than waiting for an appropriate GP appointment. Sulis supporting community pressures in primary care.
- o In April – set to launch NHS Respiratory and Sleep Study clinics as part of the CDC programme.

Alongside these NHS initiatives Sulis private activity continues to grow in line with UK private market trends (including both domestic self-pay, Private medical insured sectors).