

a vision realised

The steadfast commitment to give local people access to the best in community-based, integrated health and social care has transformed Nairn Town and County Hospital into one of Scotland's most comprehensive and distinctive multi-service facilities.



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Designed on Florence Nightingale’s approved ‘pavilion plan’ by William Mackintosh of Inverness, and with its original stone buildings completed in 1906, Nairn’s Town and County Hospital has served the local population for well over a century. Today, its role in community life is stronger than ever thanks to a powerful mix of farsightedness, determination and fresh thinking.

This achievement is even more remarkable given that, long before the hospital celebrated its centenary, its future looked bleak. Despite the genuine affection felt for a building that was an integral part of the local landscape, it was becoming increasingly clear the hospital could not continue to offer modern health services in its then form. Piecemeal additions over the years, inadequate access for less mobile patients, poor heating and ventilation, and the expense of maintaining the ageing structure were all taking their toll.

In some areas, this scenario could easily have led to the progressive withdrawal of services to other, more distant centres and ultimately to the redevelopment of the site for other purposes. However, the GPs at Nairn’s Lodgehill Clinic and Ardersier Medical Practice, who were responsible for the clinical management of the hospital, had a more positive aspiration in mind - to turn the Town and County into a modern, fully integrated health and social care facility.

Campbell Mair, General Manager of Lodgehill Clinic, can trace the origins of this

ambition back to the 1990s. “At that time the interdependency of services was being recognised and people started thinking about how to integrate them locally. Our premises needed modernisation and we saw the opportunity not just to build new GP facilities but to bring in the rest of the extended primary care team.”

A number of concerted attempts were made to get a scheme off the ground but each time the project couldn’t quite clear the final hurdles. When, in 2001, the local NHS Primary Care Trust, having approved a business case to redevelop the Town and County Hospital, decided the project was unaffordable, it could have been the end of the line. However, the Nairn and Ardersier General Practices and the South East Highland Community Health Partnership were not ready to give up.

“Working with local user groups and the public we’d developed a very clear clinical brief on the services we wanted to co-locate and integrate,” says Campbell Mair. “We decided to procure new facilities through the third party ‘design, build and lease-back route’ and we appointed Prime as our preferred developer in December 2003.” There were many selection criteria but two were critical. “We were looking for people who not only had the right experience and proven track record but who understood the importance of effective communication with the public and keeping them involved as the scheme developed.”

Leighton Chumbley, Managing Director of Prime, was equally impressed with the vision of the GPs and their steadfast commitment to seeing the project through. “Dr Alastair Noble initially and then Dr Adrian Baker led from the front. For them and the CHP it was all about the improved services they wanted for the local community and their desire to avoid the need for patients to go into acute care. It was a powerful concept that everyone could get behind and we were delighted to help them achieve their goal.”

With Prime on board as part of the project team, the next challenge was to secure the financial approvals and service commitment of all the key players including NHS Highland, the Highland Council and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Taking a service-led approach throughout this process was a major advantage. “It allowed us to take both the professionals and the patients with us step-by-step as we built the plan – which is always the best way,” says Campbell Mair.

The approval of the business case by the NHS Highland Board in summer 2005 was the next milestone, giving the project fresh impetus and enabling work to start on the detailed design. Kenny Rodgers, Finance Manager for NHS Highland, became Project Manager for the development in 2006 as the focus changed from principles to specifics. “It was about rolling up our sleeves and liaising with staff to determine exactly what was needed.”

This task was made especially challenging by the multi-tenanted nature of the building. “Each tenant had their own organisational culture and views of what should be included,” says Kenny Rodgers. “We had to agree solutions that everybody could support. Our good relationship with Prime was very important through the whole process. At the same time everything proposed had to pass a raft of tough financial tests to get approval from the Scottish Government and the health board, as well as our colleagues.”

The move to construction brought further challenges as Prime Construction Management Director, Paul Plumstead recalls. “With an A&E department and an ambulance base on site, we had to keep access clear at all times for ‘blue-light runs’. We also had to phase the build programme carefully to minimise disruption to existing hospital services and coordinate with new tenants moving in from elsewhere. Our main contractors, Morrison Construction, were adept at this.”

Work on the complex, which comprised a mix of single, two and three storey buildings, was split into several phases. Phase one included the construction of the inpatient wards, day hospital, outpatients department, A&E suites, occupational therapy and physiotherapy facilities, hospital kitchen and ambulance station. The dental clinic was also moved into temporary buildings on site. Phase two included the new GP facilities with main

hospital reception and waiting areas, along with accommodation for health visitors, district nurses, and social services.

Phase three saw the renovation and conversion of the original listed Edwardian building from an outdated and run-down hospital block into a superbly well-equipped and comfortable dental facility, complete with its own reception. Preserving the character of the hospital’s frontage was a key part of the scheme design. “It’s been very sympathetically done,” says Kenny Rodgers. “When you walk through the link corridor into the new building they’ve left the stone walls exposed so there’s a smooth transition from old to new - a nice touch.”

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Patients arriving for their appointments in the spacious primary care centre can check in with reception staff in the conventional way or use the latest electronic touch-screens



Preserving the unique character of the original stone-clad community hospital building was central to the design approach. Now housing a modern dental unit, it has been given a new lease of life.



The League of Friends raised funds to provide a TV for each bed. They can be positioned at virtually any angle for comfortable viewing. Television and telephone access are free of charge to inpatients

Project at a glance...

Nairn Town & County Hospital and Primary Care Centre

Statistics

Size: 5,500 sqm
Clients: NHS Highland,
The Highland Council,
Lodgehill Clinic,
Ardersier Medical Practice

Services and Facilities

- Two GP Practices and Primary Care Out-of-Hours Base
- 20 Inpatient Beds (Intermediate Care)
- Accident & Emergency Department
- Ambulance Station
- Minor Surgery Room
- X-Ray and Ultrasound Suites
- Outpatient Clinic
- Day Hospital
- Rehabilitation Facilities including: Occupational Therapy (Kitchen & Bedroom); Physiotherapy (Gym); Speech & Language Therapy; Social Care Assessment
- Base for: District Nursing; Health Visiting; School Nursing; Community Psychiatric Midwifery; Social Services
- Five Surgery Dental Clinic

Benefits

Enables people to benefit from more services closer to home and reduces the need for prolonged stays in acute hospital.

Provides a superb environment for patients and staff with excellent physical accessibility and room for future expansion.

Preserves the identity of the original community hospital and reinforces the commitment to maintaining local services.

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Prime Comment

Inside knowledge from the Prime Team

“Old community hospitals are often very special places that people get very attached to. As with Nairn, some of them have become part of the local fabric and so losing them when they become outdated or too expensive to run can be traumatic. We take particular satisfaction in developing ways to keep them viable and retain them as vital elements of new schemes.”

Leighton Chumbley, Prime Group Managing Director

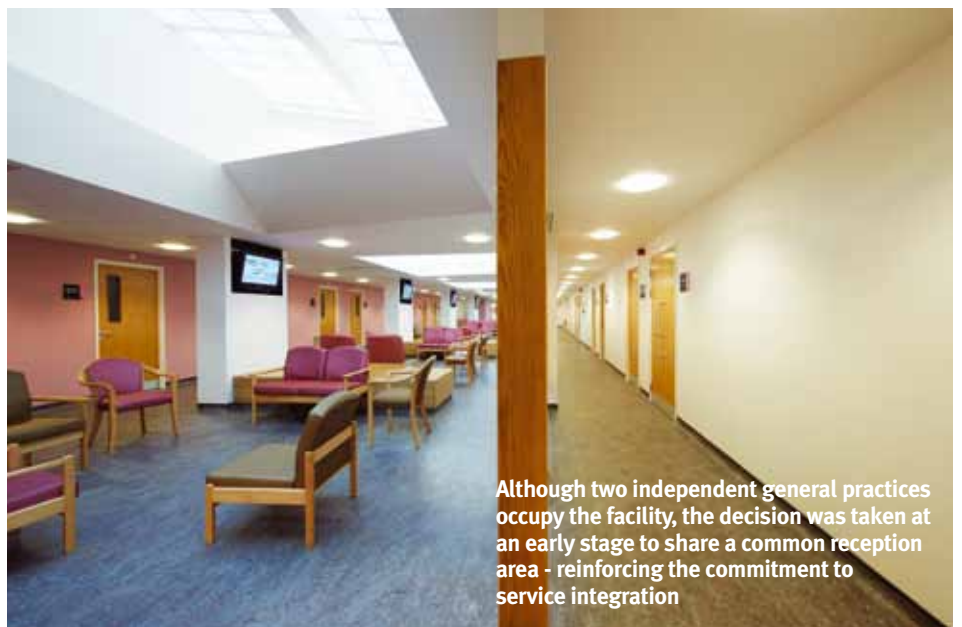


Once fully operational, the building's beneficial impacts soon became apparent. For Campbell Mair, three aspects stand out. “People take pride in their workplace and it shows in their body language and demeanour. Staff feel better about their work and that enhances the patient experience. There's also a noticeable sense of calm. The acoustics are excellent and we've got quiet spaces near the reception and waiting areas where we can talk to patients in complete privacy. And, of course, the co-location of services makes communication - informal as well as formal - so much easier, with more benefits for patients.”

Liz Bow, Chairman of Nairn Community Care Forum and Patient Representative on the Hospital Redevelopment Project Group, has no doubts about the difference the new facility is making to Nairn. “It's a brilliant development. Being able to access all the services on one site makes it so much easier for mums and babies, for the elderly, for everybody. When people have an operation in the acute hospital at Raigmore, they have the opportunity to come back to the Town and County to complete their recovery. That's huge for visiting families who would otherwise have to travel back and forth to Inverness.”

Kenny Rodgers believes the scheme has given the community new confidence about the future. “The big fear for Nairn people was that being just 15 miles away from the main district general hospital, it was inevitable that at some point the community hospital would be taken away and locally based health services would be progressively reduced. With the new development they've not only got a bigger, better and more holistic hospital, it's also effectively secured health services in the area for the next 25-30 years. That's a good place to be.”

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Although two independent general practices occupy the facility, the decision was taken at an early stage to share a common reception area - reinforcing the commitment to service integration