Belfast Health and Social Care Trust caring supporting improving together	**Paper Ref. Num.** 2026.09.24_TBP_AgendaItem10.1_P251-CapitalUpdate ***Note:- To be completed by HQ meeting organiser***

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Meeting Template Sheet (v050526)

Title of paper (Maximum of 300 characters)

Update to Public Trust Board on major capital projects

Purpose of paper	For Oversight	
If other purpose please specify	-	
Meeting TB Public		
If other meeting please specify	-	
Rationale for confidential consideration (if applicable)	-	
Presenter	**David Porter**	-
Date of meeting 24/09/2026		

Background (Maximum of 1500 characters)

This paper updates Trust Board on the following major capital projects:
- New Children's Hospital (NCH)
- New Maternity Hospital
- Acute Mental Health Inpatient Centre (AMHIC)
- New Haematology Ward, BCH

Date considered at Exec Team (If Applicable)	N/A

Options for consideration (Maximum of 1500 characters)

N/A

Recommendations (Maximum of 1500 Characters)

N/A

Proposed Onward Consideration	Next Agenda
If other	

Note:-

Any papers accompanying this template should not exceed 10 pages in length.

Please ensure when submitting papers that

(1) Orientation of paper is set so that the content of the paper can be read

(2) Embedded documents should be [provided a separate attachments

Working together Excellence Openness & Honesty Compassion

Update to Public Trust Board on major capital projects

24 September 2026

This paper is provided to Public Trust Board to update on progress on the Trust's major capital projects.

1.0 NEW CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

1.1 PROGRESS REPORT

Construction of the New Children's Hospital commenced in March 2025. Substructure construction including service tunnels is advancing well. Primary drainage works have been completed and concrete pours for Level 0, Level 1 and Level 2 are almost complete. Vertical concrete cores for lift shafts and risers are also progressing well.

The Trust continues to engage closely with the contractor in both the management of on-site activities and the ongoing review of technical submissions. Substantial progress has been made in reviewing technical documentation in collaboration with Trust representatives, the DoH Health Estates team (acting as professional and technical advisors), and the consultant design team.

A number of design and specification changes have been instructed to the water systems in the new hospital. These changes were instructed following a thorough design review of the proposed water system, and incorporate lessons learned from the Maternity Hospital project, and the requirements of recent NHS England guidance. A revised Works Information package containing the agreed changes was issued to the contractor on 27 May 2026. After an initial assessment, the NEC PM team have confirmed an 8-month delay associated with the impact of the water changes on the wider co-ordination of engineering services within the new hospital. It should be noted that the final impact of the water changes has not yet been confirmed.

The contractor is currently undertaking a detailed review of the information associated with the water changes, and will provide a full assessment of cost and programme implications. This is expected in early 2027 and may result in further programme delay. The Trust is therefore not yet in a position to confirm the full impact of the changes to the water system.

1.2 ASSURANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The Trust has formally established a suite of Project Safety Groups covering Fire Safety, Medical Gases, Electrical Systems, and Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), alongside the appointment of a Commissioning Management Specialist (CMS). These arrangements build upon the Water Project Safety Group, which has been operational since early 2025.

Each Safety Group is independently chaired by an externally appointed Subject Matter Expert, strengthening assurance arrangements, supporting robust decision-making, and reducing risks associated with commissioning.

Governance for the NCH programme is maintained through a structured and comprehensive framework, incorporating Trust Board oversight, Programme Board governance, and Departmental-level assurance.

1.3 OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO NCH

Issues relating to the retention wall along the Falls Road have been reviewed by the consultant design team. The contractor has proposed a design solution which has been accepted by the civil and structural design team. A submission has been made to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for Technical Approval of Highway Structures (TAS) in relation to the retention works. This submission is currently under review by DfI's technical team, and a further update is awaited.

The Trust has raised concerns with Health Estates regarding gaps in the Contractor Design Portion (CDP) of the contract, particularly in relation to the design of non-standard fire stopping details. Health Estates are currently working with the Contractor to ensure that this area of the design is fully covered. The contractor has not yet provided a formal response on this matter.

2.0 NEW MATERNITY HOSPITAL

2.1 PROGRESS REPORT

The consultant design team for the remediation works to the water systems within the new Maternity Hospital commenced work on the design of the new domestic water system within the neo-natal unit in October 2025. In addition to the provision of a new domestic water system within the neo-natal intensive care unit, the proposed remediation works also involve localised remediation works to the water systems throughout the remainder of the building. Belfast Trust received the RIBA Stage 1 report from the consultant design team in May 2026. This report covers the design for the new domestic water system within the neo-natal unit and the localised remediation work being undertaken within the other areas of the building. The Trust requires approval from the Department of Health before works can commence on RIBA Stage 2 design development for the new water system in the neonatal unit. Discussions with the Department regarding that approval are ongoing.

The initial phase of the remediation works is now underway on site. This involves the isolation of the existing neo-natal domestic water system. This will allow the removal of the previous system and will also allow the commencement of the localised remediation works through the remainder of the building. The first phase of the remediation work is due for completion by the end of September 2026. Revised programme and costs were received by the Trust on 27 May 2028, based on the detailed design options agreed by the Project Water Safety Group.

The Trust are currently developing an addendum to the Business Case for the Maternity project to cover the cost of the water remediation works along with other cost increases associated with the Maternity Hospital project. These additional costs will include inflationary uplift to the remaining phases of the project (demolition of elements of the existing Maternity Hospital and the construction of the new link bridge) and additional costs for asbestos removal within the basement of the existing Maternity Hospital.

2.2 PROGRAMME

As noted above, the programme for the delivery of the new water system within the neo-natal unit is currently on hold pending approval from the Department of Health to proceed with the Stage 2 design of the new water system.

The previous forecast timescale for the completion of the remedial works is shown below, however it should be noted that this will need to be updated once approval has granted to proceed to the next stage of the design.

- Localised remediation to Level 2 – estimated completion of the remediation works: February 2027 (as previously reported to Trust Board this could potentially allow for early occupation of this floor of the building, however any proposal for early occupation would be subject to the development of suitable models of care to ensure patient safety, staffing models, etc)
- Localised remediation to other levels - estimated completion November 2027
- Installation of new domestic water system to Neonatal - estimated completion November 2027
- Further refinement of the programme of works will be reviewed as the detailed design of the Neonatal Unit progresses

It should be noted that proceeding with localised remediation works throughout the remainder of the building is not a final decision. In the event that Belfast Trust is not assured that the localised remediation works are delivering a safe and robust water distribution system, the Trust may need to review the extent to which the domestic water systems need to be replaced in other areas of the building.

2.3 ASSURANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The Project Water Safety Group continues to meet every two weeks to oversee the design of the new water system within the neo-natal unit and has finalised the preferred technical approach for water system remediation. A Technical Task & Finish Group also meets weekly to agree operational issues throughout the design phase of the project.

2.4 POTENTIAL FOR EARLY OCCUPATION

As previously indicated the Trust is undertaking a process to investigate the potential for early occupation of parts of the new building where the localised remediation works could be completed in advance of the new water system being installed within the neo-natal area. However, any decision to progress early occupation will be contingent upon clearly demonstrated water system remediation, completion of detailed risk assessments, evidence

of a safe and sustainable clinical service model and alignment of workforce planning and staffing model.

2.5 INVESTIGATIONS

The Trust are aware of a number of areas of concern regarding the handling of the water systems within the new Maternity Hospital. These matters are now the subject of detailed investigation by the Trust. It would not be appropriate for the Trust to comment on such matters until these investigations are concluded. The investigation is ongoing and aims to complete by the end of October 2026.

2.6 LEGAL ISSUES

The Trust has instructed DLS to appoint an independent expert to assess the condition of the pipes that are due to be removed. The Trust expects to receive this initial report from the independent expert in December 2026.

REMEDIATION WORKS TO THE ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT CENTRE (AMHIC)

3.0 PROGRESS REPORT

As previously reported, the Trust is progressing plans to decant the Psychiatry of Old Age Ward from the Acute Mental Health Inpatient Centre (AMHIC) building to the Mahee Ward at the Knockbracken site.

A key component of this programme is the preparation of the Mahee Ward to ensure it provides a safe and appropriate environment for the admission of acute mental health patients. The Trust recognises that patients and staff are transitioning from a purpose-designed specialist facility, and it is essential that the receiving environment delivers an equivalent standard of safety and supports the continued provision of high-quality care. The consultant design team for the works at Mahee Ward has now been appointed. Approval for the Direct Award Contract (DAC) has been secured from the Department of Health, and the Trust has formally engaged the main contractor. Enabling works to the existing Mahee Ward are currently progressing on site. The works costs for the main contract for the refurbishment of Mahee have been returned higher than initially forecast. As a result, the Trust are currently working through a series of value engineering workshops to identify savings to bring the costs closer to the initial estimate previously reported to the Health Committee.

Completion of the refurbishment at Mahee is scheduled for December 2026, which will facilitate the transfer of the Psychiatry of Old Age Ward from the AMHIC building in January 2027. This programme will be subject to revision pending the completion of the value engineering exercise.

The current estimated cost of the main works to refurbish the AMHIC building is approximately £6 million. This remains a high-level estimate and will be refined as the project progresses and construction activity is underway.

3.1 BACKGROUND NOTES – LEGAL ISSUES

The Trust has been seeking updates from the Directorate of Legal Services (DLS) for a number of months regarding specialist reports into the remediation requirements for both the AMHIC and Maternity Hospital buildings, and to assess the root cause of the water ingress

and to consider potential liability associated with these issues. DLS have confirmed that they expect the report to be completed by the end of December 2026.

Pending the outcome of the reports above, the Trust is not yet in a position to confirm liability in relation to the water ingress issues identified at AMHIC.

4.0 HAEMATOLOGY PROJECT

4.1 PROGRESS REPORT

The project will refurbish and reconfigure A Floor of the Belfast City Hospital Tower to provide a new 32-bed Regional Haematology Treatment Ward, comprising single en-suite bedrooms, including 12 isolation rooms, for the permanent relocation of specialist inpatient services from Ward 10 North. The Outline Business Case received approval in December 2025 and the project is progressing through RIBA Stage 2 with the appointed design team. The latest draft programme forecasts handover in March 2031. This marks a delay in the programme of one year when compared with March 2030 completion date in the OBC programme. The project team is reviewing the drivers of this movement, which include additional stage approvals which have been requested on this project by the Department of Health, Integrated Consultancy Team appointment delays, and the need to integrate complex enabling works. The principal programme dependencies remain the relocation of approximately 80 staff from A Floor and completion of electrical infrastructure upgrades. Additional decant and phasing requirements within the live hospital environment remain a key programme risk and are not yet fully reflected in the current programme.

4.2 DECANT

The Trust has undertaken an options appraisal to determine the optimal solution for the decant of the 80 staff currently located within A Floor. The Gardner Robb Building remains the Trust's preferred decant solution due to its location on the Belfast City Hospital site and the operational requirement to retain the affected teams close to the services they support.

The Department of Health recently reviewed the Trust's options appraisal. The Department have stated that they were not satisfied with the Trust's appraisal and challenged the robustness of the capital cost estimate and the Trust's assertion that all staff currently accommodated on A Floor must be co-located on the BCH site. Following their review of the decant options, the Department withdrew approximately £1.5million of the funding for the project which had been allocated to the decant.

The Trust is now considering how the decant can be funded and progressed following the Department's decision. Delay in resolving the decant directly affects access to A Floor and the overall delivery date for the ward. If the Trust is not able to identify alternative funding, this would constitute a substantial risk the project.

4.3 ASSURANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The project is governed through the established Trust and Department of Health arrangements. The Project Board provides formal oversight and reports through the Trust's Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework. The Board meets quarterly, with additional meetings arranged where required, and receives regular status, programme, finance, and risk reports from DoH Project Managers.

Risk management is being strengthened through a coordinated occupant-safety approach, supported by specialist expertise to review key systems such as water and ventilation. Current design risks include infection control requirements, ventilation resilience, fire safety, and the impact of unknown existing services; these are being monitored through the project risk process and escalated through the established governance structure when required.

Recent decisions taken out with project governance structures (including the Department's decision to withdraw funding for the staff decant from A floor) have highlighted concerns about Senior Responsible Owner accountability.

4.4 FUNDING

The currently approved project budget is £18.819 million. The funding strategy comprises £3.3 million from charitable sources, £4.5 million from the Trust's general capital allocation and the balance from Department of Health funding. The adjusted capital profile is being reviewed following the removal of the decant allowance from the Departmental approval, after which a revised approval letter is expected.

The immediate concern is the staff relocation required to release A Floor. The Department has advised that the decant should no longer be funded within the Haematology project, leaving the Trust to identify an alternative source. Until this is resolved, there is a material risk to programme certainty, affordability, and retention of charitable support.