

Ten years of campaigning for new Eye Pavilion

Sarah Boyack MSP has been fighting for a new Eye Pavilion in Edinburgh. Here she writes about the latest developments.

Edinburgh is facing massive health challenges: A&E Waiting times are increasing; patients are waiting longer to get vital health operations and access to GPs and NHS dentists is becoming harder.

The Scottish Government's decision to not fund the construction of a new Edinburgh Eye Pavilion is indicative of these failings and will have dire consequences for Edinburgh's patients.

I have been campaigning for years to secure a new Edinburgh Eye Pavilion, after the current building was deemed not fit for purpose in 2014. In spring last year, the then Health Minister Humza Yousaf committed to the new Edinburgh Eye Pavilion.

When I sat down in October with campaigners and patients to meet the current Health Minister Michael Matheson on the urgent need for a new Eye Pavilion, we were assured the decision would be made around the budget. But no mention of the new Eye Pavilion was made in the budget in December, and it has now transpired it will not go ahead due to the Scottish Government's cuts to capital budgets.

This is a slap in the face to the patients and campaigners who have worked so hard to secure a new Eye Pavilion for the city.

With this project not going ahead, patients will be forced to use a building that is unable to deliver the standard of care required from our NHS.

The breadth and depth of support for the campaign has been inspiring. Hearing from patients, activists, and staff about the severe issues with current facilities has been both shocking and eye opening. After meeting with campaigners in November, myself, and a cross-party group of MSPs from across Edinburgh, wrote to Michael Matheson asking to work constructively towards a new Eye Pavilion. The campaign also garnered the support of Gordon Brown, who has been a patient at the Eye Pavilion for its entire existence.

However, these calls have now been rejected. The Health Minister's decision means that the Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion will fall deeper into crisis. Already, only one of its operating theatres can be used and the problems caused by floods, lifts breakdowns and other facilities, will lead to countless cancelled or delayed appointments.

The Scottish Government must stick to its election promise and fund a new Eye Pavilion. This issue goes far beyond party politics and patients must have access to the best facilities. If the Scottish Government do not reverse their decision, the consequences would be unthinkable.



Sarah Boyack Launch of 2022 Edinburgh Labour Manifesto at Coffee Saints PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter