

The need for a new eye pavilion has never been greater

Sarah Boyack MSP writes about the need for a new eye pavilion after a visit there before its temporary closure for urgent repair.

For ten years, Edinburgh's eye hospital has been not fit for purpose. However, the Scottish Government have refused to tackle this problem. Instead, they have kicked the can down the road and dithered and delayed at every turn. Initially supporting the hospital, they then U-turned and ditched the project, only to support it again in the 2021 Holyrood election. However, three years after their latest reversal, a new hospital has still not been approved.

Now, we are facing the consequences of this inaction with the shocking news that the Eye hospital will have to close for six months due to urgent repairs. For those who have been constantly raising awareness for the dire state of the current facility, this was inevitable.

I recently took up an invitation, along with fellow MSPs to tour the eye hospital with NHS staff to discuss the closure. It was clear upon entering that the building was far beyond its use by date. There are constant disruptions for patients and staff and the building is constantly hit by leaks and other maintenance issues affecting surgeries and other vital procedures.

The reports from NHS Lothian Chief Executive, Jim Crombie, and

other NHS staff about the levels of disruption that will occur from the closure, paint a grim picture. Procedures and operations that are all currently centralised in the Princess Alexandra, will be spread across NHS Lothian.

To make matters worse, the eye hospital currently operates with only paper notes. There are over 100,000 notes in the eye hospital that will need to be efficiently and quickly transferred to a myriad of locations across Lothian at a moment's notice, depending on where patients are being sent.

It was clear since 2014 that the eye hospital would eventually tip from being not fit for purpose to being unable to function. Never has the need for a new hospital been so clear but the Scottish Government still refuse to give the green light for the project to go ahead.

Patients and staff deserve so much better than a decade of dithering. With 84% of Scotland's future population growth happening in Lothian, we urgently need state of the art facilities to keep up with our growth.

In a recent roundtable I hosted, I heard harrowing stories from patients about the impact of disruptions from cancelled appointments to high costs for taxis to and from the facility. These patients are deeply anxious about how this temporary closure will exacerbate an already fraught situation.

I do not envy the position NHS Lothian has been put in. If the Scottish Government is going to continue to enforce spending cuts on our health board, then we will continue to see issues like this arise. We are staring down the barrel of a potential major health crisis in Edinburgh. The only way we can avoid a greater disaster in the future is by finally approving a new eye pavilion for our city.

[Anyone who has an appointment at the Eye Pavilion can check the up to date position here.](#)



The Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion