

CC/VAW/MC

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28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Ms Violet-Anne Wynne TD,  
Dàil Eireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

PQ 7003/23

**To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of upgrading services at Ennis Hospital to model 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Violet-Anne Wynne**

Dear Deputy Wynne,

The upgrading of any of our Model 2 Hospitals to a Model 3 is not a matter for UL Hospitals Group, or the HSE. Government policy titled 'Securing the Future of Smaller Hospitals: a Framework for Development', published in February 2013 shaped the future of Ennis, Nenagh and St John's and reaffirmed the integral role these hospitals have to play in the future growth of healthcare in the Mid-West region: in the provision of ambulatory care, chronic disease management, day surgery, endoscopy, Injury Units, Medical Assessment Units and much more. As such, UL Hospitals Group is not in a position to provide an estimated cost in relation to the upgrading of Ennis Hospital to a Model 3.

Among the key objectives of the reconfiguration programme, as set out in the (Teamwork/Horwath) consultants report was the centralisation of acute and emergency medical and surgical services, including trauma in UHL. The programme also provided for the centralisation and expansion of critical care capacity for the region in Limerick; an improved ambulance service for the region and, crucially, the development of appropriate services in the smaller hospitals (urgent care centres/injury units, medical assessment units, day surgery, radiology etc).

The aim of the reforms was to ensure that patient safety was improved across the region by delivering care in the right place and by the right teams. This required an upgrading of diagnostic, outpatient, endoscopy and day services in our model 2 hospitals.

Reopening emergency departments in our model 2 hospitals would also require considerable investment in critical care, anaesthetics, trauma and emergency surgery, advanced diagnostics and other services. Increasing specialisation in medicine, difficulties in the recruitment and retention of skilled healthcare professionals and the need for clinicians to maintain their skills by seeing sufficient volumes of patients in their specialties make this all the more challenging for our smaller hospitals. Changes in national policy in recent years reflect these realities.

As mentioned above, our Model 2 Hospitals play a vital role in the provision of ambulatory care, chronic disease management, day surgery, endoscopy, Injury Units, Medical Assessment Units and much more. Patients attending the Injury Units in Nenagh, Ennis and St John's benefit from the expertise and care of a consultant-led team of doctors, Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioners (RANPs), nurses, and other healthcare professionals who are highly experienced in the treatment of injuries that may not be threatening to life and limb, but which nonetheless require medical attention and treatment.

In 2022, a total of 38,523 patients attended our Injury Units in Ennis, Nenagh and St John's, a new record and representing a 30% increase on 2021.

In addition, the Medical Assessment Units at Nenagh, Ennis and St John's provide diagnosis and treatment for patients referred with medical conditions including chest infections, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), pneumonia, urinary tract infections, fainting episodes, clots in the leg, anaemia, or non-acute cardiac problems. Through additional staffing resources and targeted initiatives such as the NTPF, both Ennis and Nenagh MAUs have expanded their services over the past two years, making more assessment slots available for GPs in the MidWest. Medical assessment units at Ennis, Nenagh and St John's saw 12,737 patients in 2022, a new high and an increase of 19% on 2021.

We are committed to investing in our Model 2 Hospital sites to enhance non-acute patient care. In 2021, we opened a new Outpatients Department in Ennis at an offsite location on the Kilrush Road. The new OPD in Ennis has 15 clinical rooms, in addition to a phlebotomy bay, four waiting areas, offices and staff changing rooms. The new department will allow for the relocation of services such as cardiac rehabilitation, radiology and general X-Ray.

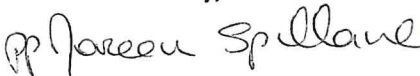
The enhanced facilities for patients and staff will allow for the future extension and expansion and overall improvement of the patient experience at Ennis Hospital. The development of the facility has been a priority for UL Hospitals Group in improving local access to non-acute patient care. A theatre upgrade was also recently approved for Ennis Hospital as part of the HSE's Capital Programme for 2022. The approved capital budget for this project is €9.95m and is currently at the design stage.

In addition, a new €1.4 million extension to the outpatients department in Nenagh opened in 2022 with the regional hub for women's health. The development also includes a dedicated Ophthalmology Injection Suite and Endoscopy Suite. The OPD will improve the patient experience for the adjacent X-ray department in the existing hospital building by adding a new patient changing room and waiting room for the CT service.

It is vital for our patients that day surgery services at all our model 2 hospitals continue to expand.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



**Prof Colette Cowan**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**UL Hospitals Group**