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Put our surgery at top of waiting list, say doctors

BY DAVID MACKAY

DOCTORS at a Moray health practice have backed a campaign for new facilities.

Staff at the Turner Memorial Hospital and Keith Health Centre say their calls for replacement buildings have been "sidelined" for more than a decade.

Despite pressing NHS Grampian every year about failing equipment, inaccessible rooms and cramped conditions, they claim their requests have been pushed aside.

Now a petition launched by the local community calling for new buildings has been signed by 1,000 people.

But although NHS Grampian last night said it was "sympathetic" to exploring the options, a spokeswoman insisted other areas were a greater priority.

Dr Clare Green said: "For at least the last 10 years we've been talking about a new facility but we've not got any further forward."

Full story, Page 3



CHECK-UP: Richard Lochhead MSP, right, meets Leon Stelmach, chairman of the practice's patient participation group, who says the 'patching up' of buildings has to stop

NEWS

Residents evacuated as area sealed off by police

Police sealed off part of a Moray town and evacuated people from their homes in an "incident" last night.

Squads of officers were called to the Pilmuir area of Forres.

Residents took to social media to say that they had been forced from their homes and urged to find somewhere else to stay overnight.

Full story, Page 3

NEWS

River rescue footballer back home

Dons star Gary Mackay-Steven is recovering at home after being pulled from a Glasgow river.

The 26-year-old was rescued from the River Kelvin on Sunday following a night out.

The winger was taken to hospital suffering from hypothermia but has been released and is back at home.

Full story, Page 7

SPORT

Win or bust for Scots

Scotland assistant manager Mark McGhee accepts Friday's qualifier away to Lithuania is the first of four must-win encounters in the bid to reach the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Full story, Back Page

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Doctors back building revamp



UNITED EFFORT: Richard Lochhead MSP, front centre, meets campaigners from the Keith Health Centre

NHS: Health centre and hospital upgrade could improve access

BY DAVID MACKAY

Doctors at a Moray health practice have backed a campaign for new facilities to replace tired buildings more than a century old.

Staff in Keith have been waiting for upgrades to the dilapidated 19th century Turner Memorial Hospital and health centre for a decade.

Parts of the "outdated" building are inaccessible for those in wheelchairs, while the 27-year-old X-ray equipment is "likely" to fail, with the room unable to host a modern equivalent.

Campaigners have warned that consultancy rooms risk being sealed off unless a replacement building is built urgently.

Now a petition to fund new buildings has been launched, with 1,000 people so far backing the call to the Scottish Government.

Among those supporting the campaign are the doctors who work at the

surgery. Dr Clare Green, a full-time partner at Keith Health Centre, said: "I've been here for 17 years and for at least the last 10 of them we have been taking about a new facility.

"But we've not really got any further forward. We've looked at sites that haven't been suitable and

"It makes it far more difficult for the doctors to do their job. It's just so inefficient"

then there's been the case of needing business plans. "The current buildings are just outdated now."

But last night NHS Grampian said while they were "sympathetic" to their plight, they had "other priorities" ahead of the Moray town.

Staff at the surgery believe their calls have been

"sidelined" for years while projects elsewhere in Moray have been completed.

Dr David Rathband said: "At the moment we've got a situation where disabled people can't get into some of the consultancy rooms. They're just not up to modern standards.

"The X-ray equipment is likely to fail and the room it's in is unable to host newer equipment.

Moray MSP Richard Lochhead intends to press the NHS to agree that new buildings in Keith are a "priority" and for costs to be drawn up.

He said: "It's very clear the community, local GPs, nurses and practice staff have a very powerful case."

A spokeswoman for NHS Grampian said: "Keith Health Centre in on our list of premises requiring more appropriate facilities. We are sympathetic to exploring options, but we have other priorities that require solutions ahead of Keith."

POLICE Residents evacuated as area sealed off

Police sealed off part of a Moray town and evacuated people from their homes during an "incident" last night.

Squads of officers were called to the Pilmuir area of Forres at about 9pm and it is believed that specialists headed north from Aberdeen to deal with the unfolding drama.

Residents took to social media to say that they had been forced from their homes nearby and urged to find somewhere else to stay overnight.

It was reported a man had been throwing tiles from his roof down towards police officers, while threatening to do himself harm.

There was speculation that the man has doused himself in petrol and had claimed to have a gun.

A police spokeswoman said: "We have got an on-going incident there at the moment, that police are in attendance at."

Concern over plans to build 67 homes

DEVELOPMENT

Plans have been submitted for 67 new homes which would form part of a new neighbourhood in the south of Inverness.

Joint applicants Redco Slackbuie Ltd, Robertson Partnership Homes and Caledonia Housing Association, want to build the properties and five business or retail units in a field by Slackbuie Farm Road, behind the Asda store.

A pedestrianised public square is envisioned as part of the plans and housing will branch off either side of a "spine street."

The proposed scheme

would sit next to a proposed 82-house development from Barratt North Scotland and a site where 60 homes and a restaurant are being built by Kirkwood Homes.

Community leaders have voiced concern about extent of housebuilding in the area which is only zoned for "mixed use for business, retail and 24 new homes" under the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan.

But the developers' planning statement states that this particular development will "not have a significant impact on the school roll."



A pedestrianised public square forms part of the plans

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