

26 January, 2012

## **NHS Borders approves full Business Case for the Margaret Kerr Unit**

NHS Borders Board has given the green light for the full business case for the construction of the in-patient specialist palliative care unit (The Margaret Kerr Unit)

At its public meeting in Newstead today, the Board approved the business case which outlines all aspects of the scheme, and also to approve the award of tender to the construction company that will be carrying out the work.

This approval means the contract is awarded to BAM Construction who are the Principal Supply Chain Partner and building work will commence at the beginning of April 2012. With an estimated construction schedule of 40 weeks, The Margaret Kerr Unit could be welcoming patients during the first quarter of 2013.

Borders is currently the only mainland health board in Scotland without a dedicated in patient palliative care facility or independent hospice. Following a review of palliative care services undertaken in 2008 by Audit Scotland, NHS Borders acknowledged that improvements were needed to the environment in which palliative care is given at the Borders General Hospital.

Scoping work commenced to investigate the type of facility that would best serve the needs of palliative patients and their families, and in 2010 a significant legacy emerged from The Miss Margaret Kerr Charitable Trust which formed the lead gift to the project, the full capital cost of which must be met by charitable funds. Following this development further funds from major contributors including The Robertson Trust were secured, and in June 2011 the NHS Borders Board gave approval for the development of a Specialist Inpatient Palliative Care Unit on the site of the BGH, with funds of £3.1 million already secured.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 a public fundraising appeal to raise the 'final million' pounds required to build The Margaret Kerr Unit was launched, which to date has raised over £70,000. Many local charities and societies including Callum's Trust, The Lavender Touch, Friends of the

Borders General Hospital and The Rotary Clubs of the Borders have pledged their support to the appeal and are actively fundraising to achieve the target as soon as possible.

The new purpose built unit will have eight en-suite bedrooms, each with direct access for patients and their families to the landscaped garden areas and wonderful views of the Borders countryside. NHS Borders will have full responsibility for the running costs of The Margaret Kerr Unit.

## Ends

### Notes to Editors:

- Palliative Care is the term used to describe the care that is given when cure is not possible. Palliative care is a proactive approach involving a multi-professional team. As well as controlling pain and other distressing symptoms, it applies a holistic approach to meeting the physical, practical, functional, social, emotional and spiritual needs of patients and carers facing progressive illness and bereavement. Although historically associated with the later stages of cancer, it is now established that palliative care should also be a routine part of care for those living with and dying from a wide variety of non-malignant conditions, such as dementia, heart failure, Huntington's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, renal failure and respiratory failure among others.

### **SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP FOR PALLIATIVE CARE**

- Specialist palliative care becomes necessary when patients with life limiting conditions have more complex needs because of severe pain or other distressing symptoms which are difficult to control. At present this care is given within a standard ward setting at the hospital which is far from ideal in terms of the environment which is required by the skilled multi-disciplinary palliative care team.
- All charitable income to the appeal would be channelled through NHS Borders Endowment Funds which already has an established fundraising infrastructure and brand image – **“the difference”** (Scottish Charity No. SC008225).

### Contacts:

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