# Press Release | 18 November 2022

**Liz Truss MP visits QEH to support urgent case for a new hospital**

The Rt Hon Liz Truss, former Prime Minister and the MP for South West Norfolk, today toured The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) to show her support for the Trust’s urgent £862m investment case for a much-needed new hospital.

Ms Truss visited the Trust’s main operating theatres where she saw first-hand how the RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) planks supporting almost 80% of the hospital buildings are failing. She also viewed work underway in the theatres to install steel and timber support props as part of an £80 million three-year nationally funded programme of work to maximise safety of the hospital for patients, visitors and staff.

There are currently 3,397 steel and timber support props installed across QEH - meaning the hospital now has six times more props than beds. A further 1,501 steel and timber support props are being installed in the Trust’s operating theatres over an eight month period to maximise safety. The significant increases in the number of props supporting the hospital’s roof is part of a planned programme of work to address the hospital’s RAAC challenges. While this work maximises safety of the roof structure it does not extend the life of the hospital beyond 2030.

Ms Truss then visited the Trust’s new state-of-the-art £12.5m Endoscopy Unit, an example of where investment has set the precedent for what a new QEH could look like. The new facility is a ‘digital’ flagship, utilising new technology, such as interactive screens to enable patients to download information to their mobile phones, providing access to handy details about the facility and their procedure.

The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP said: “I was very glad to visit QEH once again and to show my support for a much-needed new hospital. My fellow local MPs and I are of one mind that the situation at QEH is very serious and urgent action must be taken. The continuing delay for a decision as part of the new hospital programme is frustrating for patients, staff and the wider community. We need facilities that are fit for the future, rather than continually shoring up a hospital that experts have repeatedly said is at the end of its life on a short-term basis. I look forward to a decision from the Government very soon.”

QEH’s Acting Chief Executive Alice Webster said: “We were delighted to welcome Ms Truss to QEH once again. She is well-versed in the challenges we face. We have been working tirelessly to secure investment to build a new hospital to serve communities across West Norfolk, North Cambridgeshire and South Lincolnshire as national experts have said QEH will reach end of life by 2030.”

“As there is no Plan B for QEH, our overriding concern is on securing funding so that core hospital services can continue to be provided to local people from 2030 and beyond. We are confident that we can deliver our proposed scheme within the necessary 2030 timescale if the funding is agreed soon.”

Chris Lawrence, Chair of QEH commented: “Ms Truss has been a stalwart friend and supporter of the Trust and we appreciate the time she spent with us today. We were able to explain how our all-important goal is to secure national funding as a new hospital is the only sustainable long-term solution for QEH and the provision of healthcare in King’s Lynn and West Norfolk.”

“Our proposed scheme is ‘investment ready’, would bring world-class facilities to local people and help us become the best rural District General Hospital for patient and staff experience. It’s what patients, their families, our local communities and our staff deserve.”

**Ends.**

For further information, please contact Communications Team, [media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk) or 01553 613216.

**Notes to editors:**

* The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for a new Queen Elizabeth Hospital was completed in June 2022 with unanimous support from partners and stakeholders across Norfolk and Waveney, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. QEH is waiting to hear if it will be named as one of the eight further Trusts to be given funding as part of the Government’s New Hospital Programme
* As a ‘Best Buy’ hospital, QEH was constructed using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) planks which cover around 80% of the entire estate. The Government has committed to eliminating RAAC hospitals by no later than 2035. The QEH deadline as advised by national experts is 2030
* The need for a new hospital is also driven by the need for more space as the Trust has outgrown the current hospital’s footprint and is operating regularly at 100% bed occupancy
* A new hospital would help the Trust become a centre of excellence for frailty and stroke, day surgery and regional anaesthesia, research and innovation and same day emergency care. It would support the delivery of outstanding care in world-class facilities that meet the needs of QEH’s growing and ageing population
* As one of several RAAC hospitals in the country, QEH continues to invest national capital to maximise the safety and compliance of the current building. This includes completing the installation of failsafes across the buildings to minimise the risk of RAAC plank failures
* This is crucial work because even if funding for a new hospital is secured and the hospital is confirmed as one of the Government’s eight hospital schemes, the earliest a new hospital is expected to open its doors is 2029 due to the time it would take for the necessary planning, approvals, and construction
* The new Endoscopy Unit opened in September 2022. As well as improving patient care and experience it also creates the decant space needed to install failsafe roof supports in the main theatres, as the Trust continues to maximise the safety of the current hospital