

Healthy interest: local engineering professionals ready to support new hospital development



The Jersey Federation of Consulting Engineers welcomes the Government's solid commitment through its planning application for a new hospital at Overdale. In response, there's a concrete promise that local engineering talent and capacity stands ready to help see the project through.

Let's be clear – there's a long way to go before Islanders finally get the modern new hospital facilities promised for some time now. More than a decade to be exact.

But now the end – or at least end of the beginning – is coming into much sharper focus.

Plans recently submitted for a new £710m acute hospital at Overdale are clear evidence of this.

Perhaps more significantly, this application, which follows several failed predecessors, does not come with all the noise accompanying earlier attempts to move this hugely important project forward.

Instead, there's a calm, steely determination propelling this plan towards fruition.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, Jersey will get the first phase of its expansive new hospital facilities by 2028.



Local industry stands ready to support

It would be fair to say that Jersey's vitally important construction industry has watched the decade-long new hospital saga with intense interest - and understandable frustration.

Not unexpectedly, the earlier, constantly unfolding and ever more depressing, start-stop process has not been good for planning and preparation. Nor for the health and wellbeing of those involved.

Even so, the local industry stands ready to swing its considerable weight behind Overdale and other health projects.

Arguably, none more so than the Island's civil and structural engineering profession.

The Jersey Federation of Consulting Engineers represents leading local companies providing engineering design services for construction projects. This includes civil engineering, which deals with enabling infrastructure such as drainage and highways, and structural engineering, which focuses on buildings.

While individual engineering companies compete for business, the Federation's focus is developing the local profession as a whole. Ensuring a pipeline of aspiring new engineers, for example, and helping existing professionals gain accreditation and qualifications.

The tools to do the job

The Federation is also coordinating showcasing the breadth and depth of local engineering talent ready and able to support Jersey's new hospital project.

Among its ranks are companies possessing both collective and individual engineering experience of large local, national and international construction projects.

Between its members are skills and systems found in far larger jurisdictions, all finely tuned to incorporate the Jersey context – something non-Island companies often struggle with.

Driving its organisers is a determination to ensure the local profession is perfectly placed and totally committed to meeting demand for engineering excellence and capacity – minimising any need to look outside the Island.

Good reasons for keeping it local

There's been a depressing tendency in the recent past to choose UK or international companies for local work.

While there's admittedly good reasons for going off-Island in some cases, for others it can stem from misguided perceptions or assumptions. Size may be important, but big is not always best.

When it comes to engineering, understanding local conditions and constraints can be a critical factor in decision making. And lead to delivery of the right solution for best reasons.

Importantly too, using Jersey companies means investing in local talent development, assures local jobs and boosts the local economy.

With this in mind, the Jersey Federation of Consulting Engineers is determined to ensure the planned £710m investment in new health facilities helps the health of the Island on multiple levels.

A healthy local population, for sure, but also a crucial health injection into local construction sector training, jobs and revenues.

What's more, there is the assurance of an enduring legacy – a pool of experienced local professionals capable of delivering the Island's future built environment needs.

A welcome thumbs up for the Government's firm commitment to build a new hospital, therefore. And a concrete promise that local engineering talent and capacity is ready to help see the project through.

