

MEDIA RELEASE

July 16, 2014

CHS_RMH_01_14

Date is set for work to start on Rutland Memorial Hospital garden

Work is due to begin to transform a courtyard at Rutland Memorial Hospital into a therapeutic garden for patients, visitors and staff.

Designed by Oakham-based Thomas Wilson Architects and to be built by landscape garden expert David Penny, the work, costing £38,000, is being paid for using part of a bequest from Uppingham undertaker Edward Toon, who left more than £150,000 to the hospital.

In addition to low-maintenance planting, the hospital plans to add a series of locally-commissioned artworks and art installations and is investigating the possibility of further landscaping schemes for the site in Cold Overton Road, Oakham.

A plaque paying tribute to Mr Toon will be placed in the garden, which is overlooked by the hospital's in-patient Rutland Ward.

The average time spent on Rutland Ward is 21 days and the garden will play a crucial role in aiding recovery and making patients' time in the hospital as pleasurable as possible.

Original plans have been scaled back to better reflect the size of the area. It will feature raised borders, high-specification artificial turf, wheelchair-friendly flooring and contrasting pathways to help visually-impaired patients.

Pat Morley from the hospital's League of Friends welcomed the plans, saying: "This will improve the environment for patients and visitors alike and we are looking forward to its completion.

"We have many members who are looking forward to helping out, once the area is complete.

"It is also good that the project is being kept local with local architect and landscape gardener being contracted to do the work."

Rutland ward manager Sister Maria Ward said: We are delighted to have a provisional start date, subject to final confirmation with our local contractor, of September 8 so the garden can be enjoyed by patients and visitors from late autumn onwards.

"Although the project has suffered from a number of delays, the aim is to create a peaceful and contemplative space that is safe and easy to maintain. It will encourage patients and visitors to spend time outside, away from the clinical environment.

"We will be looking into further ways to make best use of Mr Toon's generous legacy and his wishes to improve the environment in and around the hospital for patients and staff."

Architect Martin Wilson believes the plans are a great chance to rejuvenate the space and allow the hospital to realise its full potential.

He said: "The design creates a series of welcoming spaces featuring seating and lush planting that will vary in colour, height and texture to intensify the sensory experience.

“Seating areas are reached along clearly defined footpaths to aid the passage of all garden users and particular measures have been taken to ensure the elderly, infirm and wheelchair users can enjoy the experience.

“It is intended that the courtyard garden will become an integral part of the hospital environment and not only prove an enjoyable place to be but also have a therapeutic effect on the wellbeing of all who use it.”

Once work is complete and plants have become established hospital managers hope to use artwork and art installations by local artists to make the courtyard an even more stimulating place.

An official opening ceremony is being planned for next spring but patients will be able to spend time in the garden from this autumn.

Fee elements are being paid from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust’s capital programme so all charity cash will go towards the garden itself.

Ends

Notes to editors

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Trust serves a population of one million, has a budget in excess of £282 million and employs approximately 5,400 staff. For more information visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk

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