

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Department of Health

WRITTEN STATEMENT TO THE ASSEMBLY BY HEALTH MINISTER MIKE NESBITT: 4 DECEMBER 2024 – MEDICAL GAS PIPES IN THE NEW MATERNITY HOSPITAL

Published at 3pm on Wednesday 4 December 2024

Mr Nesbitt (The Minister of Health): I am writing to provide an update to Members on an issue which I raised in the House on 26 November.

At the time I expressed my deep frustration with the ongoing delays to this vital new facility and a further issue that became known to me only on the morning of our debate. I know Members share my concerns about the new Maternity Hospital and I wanted to provide a written update on the issue.

I am advised that the medical gas pipe issue was raised by Belfast Trust in November 2023 as part of the contractual handover process for the building. It was detailed in the handover documentation as a “caveat” which is in essence a defect which was known at the point of handover. In recent days I have again met the Trust and it has assured me the issue with the medical gas pipework will be remedied as swiftly as possible. I have been advised the cost to resolve the issue will be approximately £50,000.

Although the defect had been identified for some time, the Belfast Trust and Departmental Officials had only recently received a report into the options for correcting the problem. I have been informed that the work going on in parallel to test the water systems regrettably, but unavoidably, contributed to the delay in the production of this report.

The Trust has advised that they will work to ensure that the issue is fixed as quickly as possible and that it will not add any further to the delays which I know Members are rightly concerned about.

While my frustrations remain, the primary focus must be on satisfactorily resolving the water supply issues and securing the opening of the new Maternity Hospital as expeditiously as possible.