

## Media Briefing

---

### St Catherine's Health Centre, Birkenhead

#### AT A GLANCE

- Officially opened Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 by HRH The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO
- Commissioned by NHS Wirral at a cost £32million
- Size - four storey, 11,100sqm redevelopment of site of the former St Catherine's Hospital and Victorian Birkenhead Union Workhouse
- Development Team – Prime plc, One Creative Environments Ltd, and a joint venture between VINCI Construction UK and Sir Robert McAlpine
- Awards – Partnerships Best Healthcare Project 2011 and BREEAM Excellent rating
- Now operated by Wirral Community NHS Trust and delivering NHS services including:
  - GP services
  - Wirral Heart Support
  - Physiotherapy
  - Health Visiting
  - Speech and Language Therapy
  - Children's Development Centre
  - Outpatient clinics
  - Wirral Sexual Health
  - Wirral Drugs Service
  - Wirral Mind
  - X-Ray

- **St Catherine's Health Centre, Birkenhead**

### **A site steeped in history**

The story of St Catherine's spans three centuries.

The site, on which St Catherine's Health Centre stands today, began its journey in 1831. Located in an area steeped in history, St Catherine's has been a central feature in Tranmere for many generations and is a constant reminder of the improvements we have seen in health and social care.

Its historical time line includes the building of St Catherine's Church from 1873 and the development of the Birkenhead Union Workhouse and school. The Birkenhead Union Workhouse was built on the west side of Church Road and opened its doors on 4th January 1864. Designed by Thomas Layland of Liverpool, the workhouse accommodated between 500 and 1,000 people. The workhouse also featured a large workhouse school at the north of the site.

During the 1860s, pressure began to mount to make improvements in workhouse medical care and it was in 1866 that such provision was introduced to the workhouse. A Workhouse Hospital was added to the south west of the site and it was from this point that the new hospital block was known as the Birkenhead Union Infirmary.

During the early 20th Century, the original hospital was replaced with two new hospital pavilions and an administrative block. In the early 1930s, the local council took over the running of the hospital, now known as Birkenhead Municipal Hospital. The workhouse continued as a Public Assistance Institution, providing accommodation for the elderly, chronically sick, unmarried mothers and vagrants until the abolition of the poor laws in 1948.

Following the birth of the NHS in 1948, the hospital was renamed St Catherine's Hospital and throughout the decades has provided a range of healthcare services from different parts of the site. It was one of the oldest hospitals in Wirral.

In response to providing a leading healthcare service to meet the needs of patients, the old hospital was demolished between 2010 - 2013, and between 2010 - 2012 the new health centre was built. St Catherine's Health Centre is now a state of the art facility, where people can see a specialist and receive their healthcare without attending hospital.

## Developing a Healthy Future for St Catherine's

Redeveloping the old St Catherine's Hospital site in Birkenhead was always about more than replacing century old buildings. It was an opportunity to help regenerate an entire community, enhance the surrounding environment and deliver a £32m health facility **[Picture 1]**.

Commissioned by NHS Wirral, this visionary four-storey 11,100 sqm facility is built on the historic eight-acre site of the original St Catherine's Hospital. Healthcare specialist Prime plc, design team One Creative Environments Ltd (One) and Integrated Health Projects (IHP), a joint venture between VINCI Construction UK and Sir Robert McAlpine, are the team that delivered the project, which achieved a BREEAM Excellent rating.

In 2008, NHS Wirral launched a consultation exercise to seek views on plans to build a new community healthcare facility – fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In 2009, the proposals were approved and a multi million pound transformation started. The old hospital blocks **[Picture 2 and 3]** were gradually demolished and replaced by a single, modern building in the centre of an attractive landscaped site.

Under NHS structural changes, ownership of the site transferred to Wirral NHS Community Trust in April 2013. However, the newly transformed site offers a range of health services including community outpatient facilities offering services such as specialist heart support, health visiting, physiotherapy and sexual health. The centre is also home to two GP practices, children's outpatient services from the local hospital as well as local drug and alcohol services and a pharmacy. It is essentially, an integrated local healthcare facility, offering support right at the heart of the community.

The visionary 4-storey building uses the historic Grade 2 listed St Catherine's Church as a central feature for the development, leading the building to naturally curve around the church - creating a 'smile'. **[Picture 4]** The building has been designed with five individual clinical wings linked together by a central airy 'street'. Internally, the 'street' has been inspired by a cruise ship, reflecting the local shipbuilding heritage and the Cammell Laird shipyard that can be seen from the upper floors of the building. The space between the wings has created several finger courtyards, including an outdoor gentle exercise area for physiotherapy and heart support patients, a quiet courtyard with informal seating areas to provide a quiet retreat for staff and patients, and a children's play area with a colourful play surface and bright planting. It is a healthcare oasis in the centre of a built up urban community.

## Integrating the past

Once hemmed in and bordered by walls or railings on all sides, the Grade II listed St Catherine's Church has now become a central feature of the development, while opening up the site to create a new public space that connects with the local community.

While the scheme delivers a modern primary care hub for the local community, it also respects the heritage of the site. Working closely with the community and the local Birkenhead Historical Society, means a number of important original features have been retained such as the old hospital stone archway (the original Work House entrance), which uses this feature as one of the main pedestrian entrances to the new development and the old Port House lodge, which has been refurbished and extended for use as a community building. **[Picture 5 and 6]**

## ENDS

For more information please contact

**Helen Norris, Wirral Community NHS Trust 0151 514 6365**  
[Helen.norris@wirralct.nhs.uk](mailto:Helen.norris@wirralct.nhs.uk)

## Pictures

Picture 1 – The new St Catherine's Health Centre

Picture 2 – St Catherine's Hospital prior to demolition – aerial shot

Picture 3 – St Catherine's Hospital prior to demolition – former main entrance

Picture 4 – Architects drawing of the site

Picture 5 – Historic features retained in the development

Picture 6 - Historic features retained in the development

## Useful contacts:

Wirral Community NHS Trust  
[www.wirralct.nhs.uk](http://www.wirralct.nhs.uk)

Prime plc  
[www.primeplc.com](http://www.primeplc.com)

One Creative Environments Ltd  
[www.oneltd.com](http://www.oneltd.com)

The Workhouse, the story of an institution  
[www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk)

Birkenhead Historical Society  
[www.birkenheadhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.birkenheadhistorysociety.org.uk)

St Catherine's Church  
[www.stcatherinestranmere.co.uk](http://www.stcatherinestranmere.co.uk)