

NCH IN D8

[Residents Alliance Group](#) January 2021

The NCH remains open during current lock down.

The Residents Monitoring Committee has been informed by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) that the site is a designated “essential site” and that work will continue during the current lock down.

Resident representatives on the committee expressed their concern at the site remaining open during this lock down. The risk to both worker and resident alike of having an additional 1000 workers coming into the community on a daily basis is an unnecessary risk.

How essential is the site given that the current projected finish date is **October 2023**?

The NCH is an essential site this time around is due to amendments made to the Health Act ([HEALTH ACT 1947 \(SECTION 31A - TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS\) \(COVID-19\) \(NO. 10\) \(AMENDMENT\) REGULATIONS 2021](#)) One of the amendments refers to “the construction or development of essential health and related projects” an effective “anything can fit” loophole.

Resident representative were informed that the decision to designate the NCH site an essential site was taken by the Strategic Capital Investment section of the Dept of Health.

*“Following the recent move to Level 5 restrictions, the Government decided that certain essential health projects could continue and that the National Children’s Hospital project is comprehended within the exemption to closure.....
The health and safety of the people working on the construction site, as well as those living in close proximity to the site, is of paramount importance to everyone working on the project. The NPHDB has advised the Department that it continues to monitor the site to ensure that the main contractor, BAM, is operating to the highest safety standards and in full compliance with the agreed procedures for operating under Covid 19 restrictions.”*

Dept of Health Strategic Capital Investment

Dublin City Council informed residents that it must follow the Government decision and cannot close the site or stop derogations.

“As you are aware the National Children’s Hospital development has been deemed by Government as an essential health project and as such is exempt from the general closure requirements applied to construction sites under the recently enhanced Level 5 Covid restrictions. The City Council cannot therefore require that works stop on site, nor can we ban derogations for works that cannot reasonably be carried out during standard working hours, as to do so would hamper progress on the site to such an extent that the development would potentially come to a standstill or its delivery timeline extended.”

Dublin City Council Planning

The Residents Monitoring Committee have met three times since the site reopened earlier this month to discuss the management of workers parking, accessing the site and using community facilities during the day

In response BAM have agreed to have security personnel walk around the Luas line, Rialto Street and the shops to encourage workers to maintain social distancing and to use their face masks at particular times of the day.

In addition the security personnel are to discourage parking in residential areas around the site.

Feedback to BAM on their street presence to date is that it is not visible to the public who would greatly appreciate the reassurance of “seeing the management of staff off site”.

In terms of on site management Bam have put in place a number of actions that is reducing staffs desire to leave site. Free tea and coffees are available on site. All staff leaving the site must remove all personal protective equipment (PPE) before they leave. There is evidence of reduced numbers of workers on the street in the area which is to be welcomed.

As was pointed out by the NPHDB BAM adhere to all HSE guidelines in regards to managing covid on the site. Temperatures are taken on arrival, all new staff are inducted and to date there have been no outbreaks of co vid on site the instances of covid to date have been all traced to community outbreaks.

Furthermore BAM have introduced a new requirement whereby all NCH Project site personnel are required to carry out a weekly COVID-19 PCR saliva test.

The Healthwatch serial COVID-19 PCR testing programme will take place for a minimum period of six weeks, with the period being re-

evaluated near the end of the six week duration, to determine if the testing programme should be extended depending on the national situation at the time. This is a compulsory measure and must be carried out on a weekly basis by all site personnel direct and indirect labour.

To date 300 staff under went a trial run where 6 staff tested positive to co vid, none of the positive cases were displaying any symptoms however as a result they are sent home to isolate and to inform local doctor. In addition all contacts are also contacted.

This additional monitoring is particularly reassuring to site staff and their families that workers are heading off each morning to a workplace that is safe. This positive measure was also welcomed by resident representatives.

Questions still remain regarding the designation of the NCH site as an essential site. The fact remains the site is in a residential area and is located on the site of the biggest and busiest hospital in the country.

Residents still seek answers from government to the following questions: What risk assessment was taken prior to the designation?

Was the location of the site taken into account when it was afforded designated status?