

Halligan: Cath Lab will not be delayed

Minister of State John Halligan (IA) has re-iterated the Government's commitment to deliver the second cath lab at University Hospital Waterford, opening Damien Tiernan's 'Deise Today' debut on Monday to make his case.

In a statement issued on to The Munster Express on Friday last, Minister Halligan said: "Arising from comments at this week's PAC, Senator Paudie Coffey and I held a meeting with An Taoiseach on Thursday afternoon at which we sought clarity on whether the second cath lab project at UHW was in any danger of being delayed or cancelled."

He added: "The Taoiseach noted that it was also stated at the PAC that Minister Harris has instructed for the second cath lab at UHW to be prioritised. And he gave us his word that the second cath lab will be included in the upcoming HSE Capital Plan for 2019, which Minister Simon Harris is to sign off on shortly."



"Subsequently, Minister Harris emailed all South East Oireachtas members confirming that the second cath lab at UHW would neither be cancelled or delayed as a result of the overspend on the National Children's Hospital. I welcome this clarity and look forward to seeing physical progress on the new cath lab in the coming months." The Minister's email, seen by this newspaper, was sent to all the region's Oireachtas members on Thursday afternoon last. It reads: "Further to my earlier note to assure you that I am committed to the provision of a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford, I wish to further clarify the increased cost of the National Children's Hospital will not have the consequence of cancelling nor delaying this project. The cost of progressing this is being considered in the context of the HSE's Capital Plan for 2019, which is currently being finalised."

Twenty-four hours earlier, Fianna Fáil TD Mary Butler had asked the Government to confirm that the €4.35 million funding earmarked for the second permanent Cath lab at UHW remained in place despite the significant budget overruns on the National Children's Hospital project. "Don't get me wrong, we need this (children's) hospital built, but to total cost rising from just over €400 million in 2012 to an expected €1.4 billion now puts many of the capital health projects at risk."

Deputy Butler stated: "The Oireachtas members from the South East were promised by Minister Harris that the €4.35 million funding needed to deliver a second cath lab would be delivered as part of the 2019 health capital plan... "Last Saturday (week), thousands of people from the South East took to the streets of Waterford to protest at the lack of 24/7 cardiac care at UHW. This uncertainty, following progress made by the South East Oireachtas members working together, is very worrying and is not acceptable. Clarity is necessary; any further delay in delivering this permanent cath Lab will not be tolerated."

Regarding the budget overrun with the National Children's Hospital, Deputy Butler said: "The buck stops with the Government, and the relevant ministers. The Taoiseach during his time as Health Minister was aware of the growing costs yet did nothing. Now as Taoiseach, he has overseen further increases and has still done nothing." Answers are needed as to why various Ministers sat on their hands and let costs rocket. The people of Waterford and the South East deserve improved health facilities every bit as much as the people inside the M50."