

Rising from the ashes

Director's Update - May 2021

By Professor Nic Jones, Director of Strategic Initiatives, MCRC

In 2017, a fire caused serious damage to the Paterson research building, leading to the displacement of over 300 scientists and research staff. Whilst causing setbacks in world-leading research activities, the fire gave rise to a new opportunity to create a brand new globally leading cancer research facility. As construction continues, the new facility lends promise to scientific collaboration and a transformation in cancer patient outcomes.

In July 2019, we outlined our ambition for the new £150 million flagship purpose-built biomedical research centre that will replace the Paterson building. It is a critical development in our journey to become one of the top five preclinical, translational and clinical cancer centres in the world. Realising this ambition will ensure that the impact of our research and on patient benefit will not only be delivered locally and nationally but also internationally.



This new facility is designed to support our translational approach to cancer research and care, by promoting the interaction, integration and collaboration between research and clinical staff through co-location. As a result, joint research programmes will be stimulated that tackle some of the most important challenges in cancer detection and care. The new building, with its state-of-the-art facilities and with the research it supports will also act as an important tool in attracting new talent from all over the world.

The building will be twice the size of its predecessor, bringing together the largest concentration of scientists, doctors and nurses in Europe. A further 400 staff will be supported by the facility, alongside the 350 research scientists and support staff who are currently displaced.

Building Development Progress

Building work has continued throughout the pandemic. Whilst facing challenges over the past year, construction has now reached the fourth floor, with another five to go. The building is scheduled to reach its apex on the 10th September 2021, with final completion due by December 2022. Concrete has been poured up to level four with the basement fit-out beginning in May. Discussions are ongoing to determine the exact distribution of groups across the four floors of research space and our multiple laboratory blocks.

The economic hit to research funding organisations and academic organisations as a result of the pandemic has been immense but the commitment of the partnership between The University of Manchester, Cancer Research UK, and The Christie NHS Foundation Trust has remained incredibly strong. It is a clear illustration of the confidence the partners have in the strength and direction of cancer research in Manchester.

In the end, the building is simply a conduit for great science; what really matters is the research that will go on in the building because that is what's really going to gain recognition. The exciting bit is the way the building is designed, the way the philosophy works the whole essence of team science. We believe this will result in more translational research and therefore a bigger impact on cancer patients going forward.

We'll be beginning more regular communication updates with our researchers, clinicians and staff from across Manchester in order to draw more attention to this impressive new build and effectively showcase that in Manchester, we can Re-Write the future of cancer.

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