

Email: tsdft.foirequests@nhs.net
Our Ref: TSD10612

5th October 2026

Dear Ms Colley,

Request for Information

We are writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information you requested.

A copy of the information is below:

I understand that Torbay Council has agreed to provide a loan of £7.5 million to the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in connection with proposals for a centralised pathology hub at Gadeon House, Exeter. At the same time, concerns have been raised locally regarding the future of pathology services at Torbay Hospital and the potential consequences for patients requiring urgent histopathology support.

As members of the public, clinicians, patients, and elected representatives seek to understand the rationale behind these decisions, a number of important questions arise.

1. Justification for the proposed £7.5 Million Loan

- a. What was the specific business case supporting the decision to provide a £7.5 million loan to another NHS Trust?**
- b. What alternatives were considered?**
- c. Was any assessment undertaken comparing the cost of repairing, upgrading, or modernising existing pathology facilities at Torbay Hospital against relocating services to Exeter?**
- d. If concerns relate primarily to the condition of the pathology building, why was capital investment in the existing Torbay Hospital estate not pursued as the preferred option?**

[The Trust is not party to the separate contractual arrangements between Torbay Council and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and does not hold the requested information. You may wish to redirect this part of your request to those organisations.](#)

- Torbay Council can be contacted via:
Freedom of Information
Torbay Council
Town Hall
Castle Circus
Torquay
TQ1 3DR
Email: foi@torbay.gov.uk
- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust can be contacted via:
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford) and Eastern services:
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford),
Barrack Road,
Exeter,
EX2 5DW,
Tel: 01392 411611
rduh.foi@nhs.net

2. Impact on Histopathology and Frozen Section Services

- The histopathology department at Torbay Hospital has long been regarded as a highly efficient and clinically important service.**
Can the Trust confirm whether the proposed pathology hub would result in the removal, reduction, or relocation of histopathology functions currently undertaken at Torbay Hospital?
Relocation. There are no plans that would reduce the availability of urgent or time-critical pathology support for care at Torbay Hospital
- Specifically, what assessment has been made of the impact on surgical procedures requiring frozen section analysis during operations?**
There will be a modern laboratory for routine work with clearly defined pathways for any time-critical work, including intraoperative support such as frozen sections and urgent cancer requirements, to ensure safe and timely patient care. The clinical model is still in development by the consultants and lab leads and this is a key output
- If frozen section services are no longer available locally, will patients requiring procedures dependent upon those services be redirected to Exeter or Plymouth?**
There are no plans that would reduce the availability of urgent or time-critical pathology support for care at Torbay Hospital.

d. What modelling has been undertaken regarding:

i. Increased waiting times.

National standards for cellular pathology reflect that most diagnostic work is not immediate, with 90% of cancer-related results expected to be reported within 10 calendar days. These standards underpin how services are designed and will continue to be used as the benchmark for quality and performance. Local turnaround times are already monitored and will continue to be tracked through transition, with the explicit requirement that standards are maintained.

ii. Delays in diagnosis.

Please see the answer to 2d above.

iii. Theatre utilisation.

Cellular Pathology does not impact theatre utilisation

iv. Clinical risk.

Cellular pathology is part of our clinical support services rather than a patient-facing service. The change we are making is therefore about how we provide safe, sustainable laboratory facilities and diagnostic support, rather than changing where patients receive care. Urgent and time-critical pathology work needed to support care at Torbay Hospital will continue to be available through clear and agreed clinical processes, including through the Acute Services Laboratory on site where this is required.

v. Patient travel burdens.

There is no change to where patients will receive care.

vi. Workforce retention and recruitment?

We recognise that this has been a difficult and uncertain period for cellular pathology colleagues and the wider pathology teams. There is ongoing direct engagement with cellular pathology colleagues, including meetings with the Chief Executive, other senior leaders, staff side representatives and HR. Cellular pathology colleagues are involved in the design, fit-out and day-to-day planning of the new service. Implementation planning includes:

- retention and recruitment considerations
- potential relocation linked to histopathology activity
- formal equality impact assessment and mitigations

The move also directly addresses known safety risks in the current environment.

e. Will the Trust publish the full clinical impact assessment?

This information is exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act, as it is intended for future publication as part of the full and final business case.

3. Substantial Change and Public Consultation

The proposed changes appear capable of materially affecting the availability and accessibility of diagnostic and surgical services for residents throughout the Torbay and South Devon catchment area.

a. Given this, can the Trust explain whether it has considered whether the proposal constitutes a substantial development of, or substantial variation in, health services?

Yes. The Trust has considered the nature of the proposed change. The programme relates to cellular pathology (histopathology), which is a clinical support service rather than a patient-facing service. The change concerns how the Trust provides safe, sustainable laboratory facilities and diagnostic support, rather than changing where patients receive care or access clinical services. Urgent and time-critical cellular pathology work required to support care at Torbay Hospital will continue to be available through clear and agreed clinical processes, including through the Acute Services Laboratory on the Torbay site where clinically required. Having considered the proposal, the Trust's position is that it relates to the future provision of laboratory facilities and diagnostic support services rather than a change to patient-facing healthcare services.

b. If so:

i. What legal advice was obtained?

No external legal advice was sought in relation to this matter. In considering the proposal, the Trust referred to relevant national guidance, including NHS England's *Planning, Assuring and Delivering Service Change for Patients*, and considered the nature and impact of the proposed changes through its established governance processes. The Trust's assessment was that the proposal relates to the provision of a clinical support service and laboratory accommodation, rather than a change to where patients receive care or access services.

ii. Was the Integrated Care Board consulted?

The ICB are aware of the significant estates and infrastructure risks associated with the Trust's existing cellular pathology laboratory and supported our bid for monies through the NHS estates safety fund to address these risks. The ICB are aware of the target operating model under the Peninsula Pathology Network and this is an NHS England led strategy

iii. Was the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee consulted?

No. The programme relates to the provision of a clinical support service and laboratory accommodation, rather than a change to where patients receive care or access services. We attended Torbay Council Adult Health and Social Care Overview Sub-Board on 16 July 2026 and a briefing on the programme was included in our update paper to the Sub-Board.

iv. Why has there been no public consultation to date?

Please see the answer to 3 a above

4. Governance and Accountability**a. Who authorised the proposal in principle?****i. service location**

The proposal to relocate routine cellular pathology (histopathology) services to Gadeon House, Exeter, was considered through an options appraisal and business case process. The options appraisal and business case were considered by the Trust's Executive Committee on 25 March 2026. Due to the requirement to commit NHS England capital funding by 31 March 2026, the decision was then taken on 26 March 2026 under the Trust's urgent decision-making arrangements by the Chief Executive and Chair, in accordance with the Trust's governance processes. The proposal was subsequently reported to the Trust Board through the Chief Executive's report to the Private Board meeting on 02 April 2026 and was formally and retrospectively endorsed by the Trust Board on 07 May 2026.

ii. service delivery arrangements

The service delivery arrangements formed part of the options appraisal and business case considered through the governance process described above. These arrangements included the relocation of routine cellular pathology activity to Gadeon House while maintaining arrangements for urgent and time-critical cellular pathology work required to support patient care at Torbay Hospital. The proposal was considered by Executive Committee on 25 March 2026, approved under urgent decision-making arrangements by the Chief Executive and Chair on 26 March 2026, reported to the Trust Board on 02 April 2026 and formally endorsed by the Trust Board on 07 May 2026.

iii. provider responsibilities

There is no change to provider accountability. We continue to provide the service.

iv. and the associated £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council

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Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford),

Barrack Road,

Exeter,

EX2 5DW,

Tel: 01392 411611

rduh.foi@nhs.net

b. Which committees, boards, executive groups, or governing bodies considered the proposal?

i. service location

Please see the answer to 4a i above

ii. service delivery arrangements

Please see the answer to 4a ii above

iii. provider responsibilities

N/A

iv. and the associated £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council

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c. On what dates were discussions held?

i. service location

Please see the answer to 4a i above

ii. service delivery arrangements

Please see the answer to 4 a ii above

iii. provider responsibilities

Not Applicable

iv. and the associated £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council

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d. What votes took place?

i. service location

Please see the answer to 4a i above

ii. service delivery arrangements

Please see the answer to 4 a ii above

iii. provider responsibilities

Not Applicable

iv. and the associated £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council

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e. What objections or concerns were raised?

i. service location

Please see the answer to 4a i above

ii. service delivery arrangements

Please see the answer to 4 a ii above

iii. provider responsibilities

Not Applicable

iv. and the associated £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council

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f. Please provide copies of:

i. Board papers.

ii. Committee reports.

iii. Business cases.

i. Financial appraisals.

ii. Clinical impact assessments.

iii. Risk registers.

iv. Equality impact assessments.

v. Minutes of all meetings where these matters were discussed or approved.

Please could you clarify whether your request for the above documents relates to the £7.5 million loan provided by Torbay Council, or whether it relates to Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust's own decision-making?

If your request relates to the Trust, please specify the project, proposal or matter to which the requested board papers, committee reports and business cases relate. This will enable us to identify and consider the correct information. As currently worded, this part of your request is too broad for us to determine which records are being requested.

If your request relates to the separate contractual arrangements between Torbay Council and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, the Trust is not party to those arrangements and does not hold the requested information. You may wish to redirect this part of your request to those organisations.

g. Edginswell Employment Land

I also seek clarification regarding the recent disposal of employment-designated land at Edginswell to Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust. Public reports indicate that governance processes may have been accelerated and that the intended use of the site is as a car park for a period of at least five years. Can the Council explain:

- i. Why employment land was released for this purpose?**
- ii. What alternative sites were considered?**
- iii. What economic impact assessment was undertaken?**
- iv. What governance process was followed?**
- v. Which officers and members approved the transaction?**
- vi. Please provide the relevant reports, delegated decision notices, committee papers, and minutes.**

[We do not hold this information, please contact Torbay Council directly.](#)

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[Torbay Council](#)

[Town Hall](#)

[Castle Circus](#)

[Torquay](#)

[TQ1 3DR](#)

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h. Transparency and Public Confidence

These decisions have the potential to affect healthcare provision for hundreds of thousands of residents across South Devon for many years. The public is therefore entitled to understand:

- a. Whether these proposals are definitive or still under consideration;**
[We consider these matters to have been addressed in our responses above.](#)

- b. The anticipated impact on local services;**
The anticipated impact on local services is addressed in the responses provided under section 2 above. The full clinical impact assessment is intended for future publication as part of the full and final business case
- c. The financial rationale underpinning the decisions;**
The relevant Board papers set out the financial rationale for these decisions.
- d. The governance processes followed;**
The relevant Board papers set out the governance processes followed.
- e. The opportunities available for public scrutiny and consultation.**
The relevant Board papers address this matter, including whether any public scrutiny has taken place and whether further scrutiny or consultation is planned.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting.

If you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact us, quoting the FOI reference number above.

If you are unhappy with the way in which we have handled your request, please contact the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Lead in the first instance. If you wish to make a formal complaint, you should write to our Complaints Manager at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, First Floor Bowyer Building, Torbay Hospital, Torquay TQ2 7AA or by email to tsdft.feedback@nhs.net

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint or the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner will only make a decision once you have exhausted the complaints and/or internal review process provided by us. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or through this link <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team