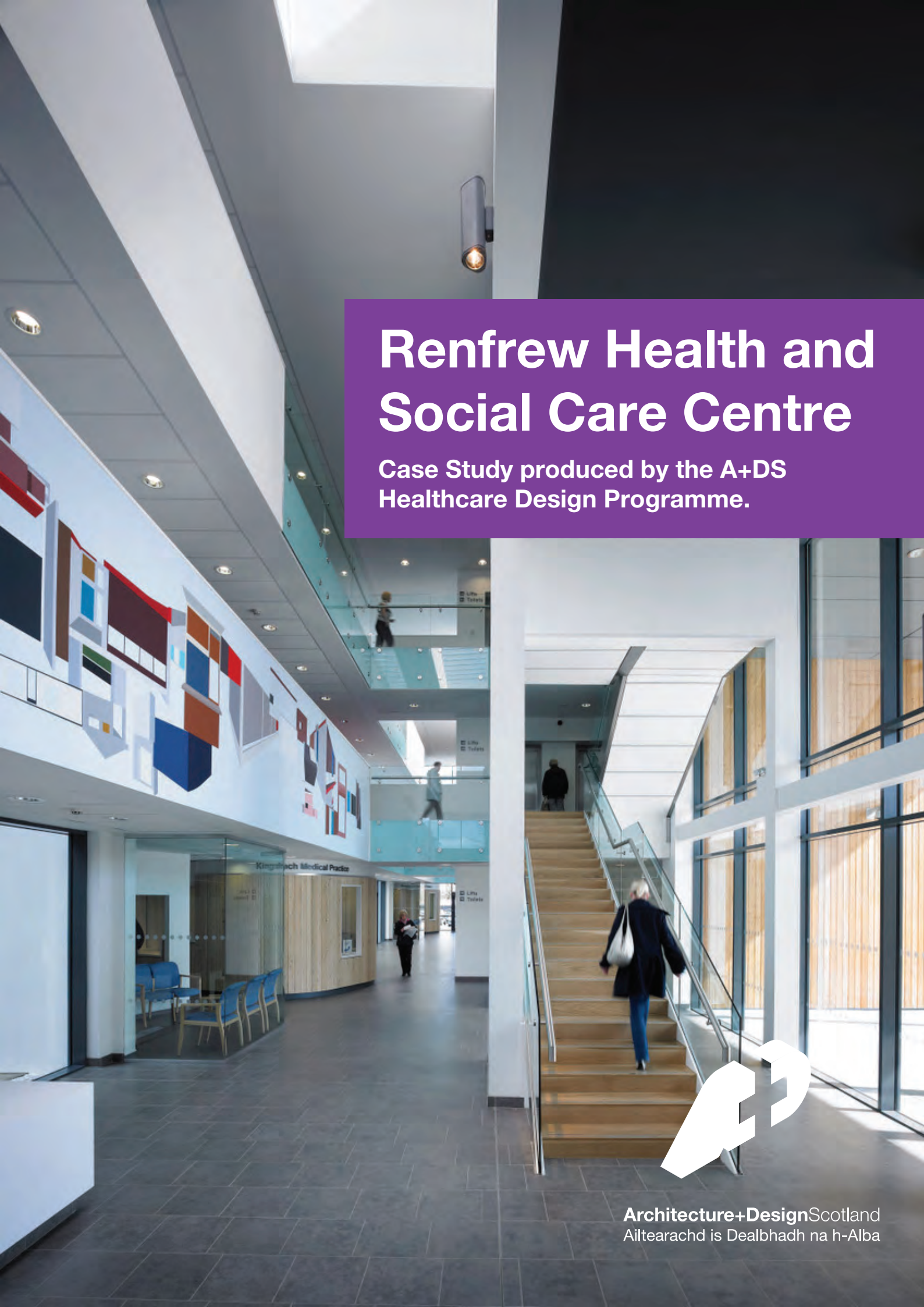


Renfrew Health and Social Care Centre

Case Study produced by the A+DS
Healthcare Design Programme.



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^ Street Elevation

Overview

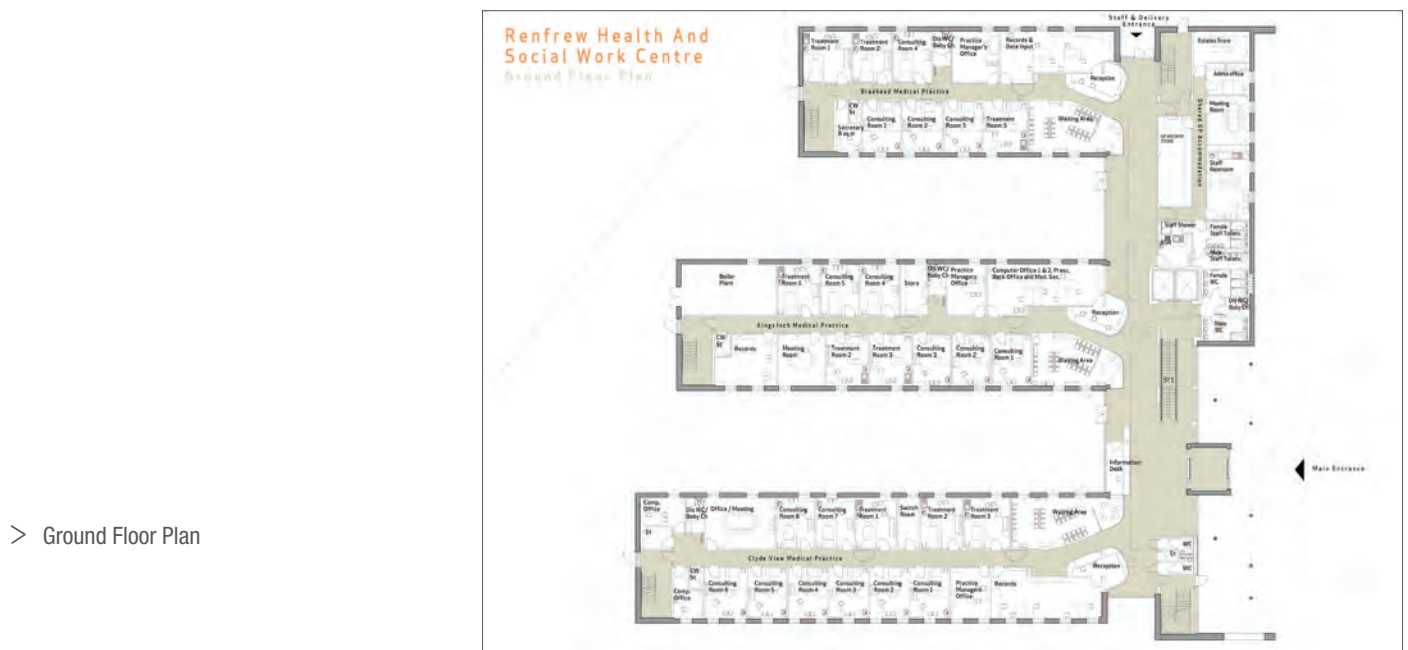
The Renfrew Health & Social Work Centre offers its users a diverse range of services, jointly provided by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership, in a purpose built facility that has received much critical acclaim since opening in March 2010.

Previously home to a council depot, the redevelopment of the site for the new centre follows on from the success of the improvements made recently to the public realm in Renfrew. The form of the building can be seen from the town's precinct as a modern rectilinear composition of precast concrete, dark grey brick and expanses of glass, in stark contrast to the appearance of the buildings adjacent to it. Coloured glass fins attached to the main street elevation reinforce the iconic character of the centre, which also has a strong civic presence with a new public square incorporated as part of the scheme. Councilor Derek Mackay, Leader of Renfrewshire Council, applauded the new centre in saying:

"The opening of this outstanding facility marks a major milestone in regeneration of Renfrew's town centre. Bringing together all these services under one roof will ensure that residents have excellent and seamless access to the services they need, when they need them"

Experience

From the outset the architect aspired to create a building that had a distinct feeling of welcome. Upon arrival at the centre people are enticed from the public square through a double height curtain wall of glass in to the heart of the building. At this point the vast internal street allows users to see beyond the main entrance to the 3 main wings, arranged perpendicular to it, and also gives glimpses to the two upper storeys. Moving away from the entrance the natural flow of the building's simple layout works in conjunction with instances of vibrant colours and large format art works



> Ground Floor Plan

on key walls to guide users and allow them to find their way around the centre with little fuss or confusion.

The ground floor is used by 3 different GP practices that have their own dedicated reception and waiting space leading off of the internal street to one of the three wings belonging to each surgery. Accommodation on the first floor is varied with a series of dental, physiotherapy, podiatry, audiology and speech therapy suites as well as a general clinic space that can be booked for use by other complimentary services. The topmost storey, second floor, is given over more so to staff and is home to Renfrewshire Council's social work office, learning disabilities service and community health care team along with a generous staff area.

Perhaps one of the most endearing qualities of the new centre is that it doesn't feel at all busy even on days when the building is being used to its full capacity by all of the above services. The muted interior and the influx of natural light in to the main public spaces help to achieve this and, with each of the services self-contained within their respective areas, the care environment within the centre has an uplifting sense of calm and serenity. This also aligns with the centre's objective to maintain the quality of the care provided, as highlighted by Liz Cowie, the Operational Support Manager at the centre, who said:

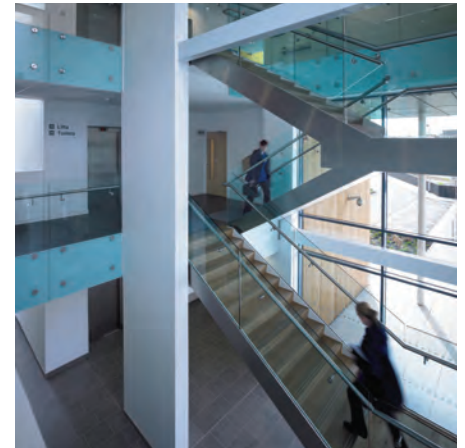
"I think we always gave good care, but I think we're giving good care in a really nice environment now."

As an integral part of its design, the building has also been carefully considered in terms its sustainability. A biomass boiler provides the vast majority of its heating requirements, which helps to reduce CO₂ emissions and in actual fact was very rarely used over the summer months because of the ability of the buildings fabric to effectively retain heat. The amount of energy required to artificially light the centre has similarly been moderated due to the amount of natural light that floods the interior through floor to ceiling windows and rooflights wherever possible. In addition to these measures, the modular nature of the buildings steel superstructure has a degree of flexibility, which means that the internal layout could be reconfigured to suit the needs of any of the particular services should they change or grow in the future.

Reaction

So far the new centre has been a huge hit with patients and has been heralded as a real triumph, with worthy praise in both local and national press. In November 2010, Health Facilities Scotland honoured the project's success by awarding it their annual Design Award as well as the Paul Taylor Award, which is given to the best overall project out of all the Health Facilities Scotland Award winners. Shortly after the awards ceremony Councillor Eileen McCartin, Convenor of Renfrewshire Council's Community and Family Care Policy Board, said that:

"The positive feedback we've had locally since the centre opened has now been backed up with two prestigious national awards. Clearly the centre is already going from strength to strength."



Staircase in public area



Renfrew Health and Social Care Centre



^ Main entrance from public square

The reaction of those who work at the centre has not gone unnoticed either with Jean Still, Head of Administration for Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership, explaining that:

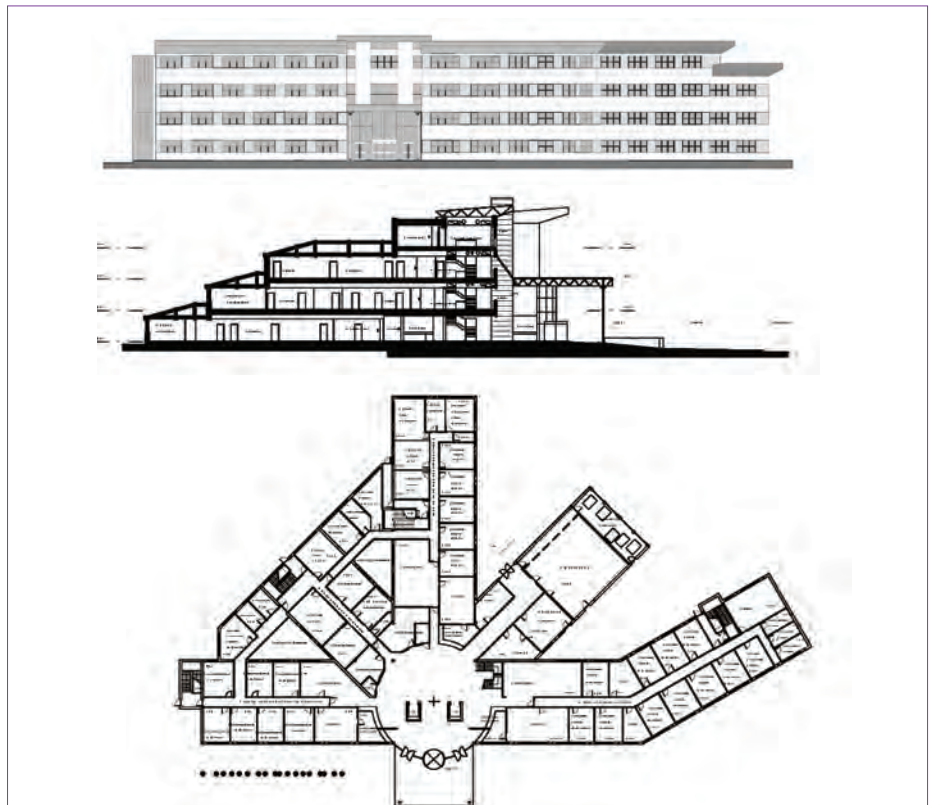
"...some staff that we've got work in lots of different centres, but they all want to come and work here."

It hasn't always been plain sailing for the development of the new centre. Back in 2003 when the project to replace the existing Renfrew Health Centre was first conceived a scheme design was developed in house by the local authority in collaboration with a number of user groups and clinicians; however the procurement of the project then stalled due to funding problems.

When Argyll & Clyde Health Board was dissolved in 2006, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde took on the project. Having a reputation for commissioning some great new community healthcare buildings (see Client Leadership publication), the team was keen to improve on the proposal that existed and made a radical decision to search for better design ideas through a Design and Build tendering process. The tender documents included the previous design, which had planning consent, as an example but clearly described that alternate designs were not only encouraged, but that the quality of these would be key in the bid assessment, and further that Architecture and Design Scotland would be part of the assessing panel.

Clearly the market rose to the challenge as all of proposals submitted by the three shortlisted teams improved on the 'exemplar' scheme. The proposals were presented to stakeholders such as the patient/public forum, various social work and health managers and other building users

> Top-lit atrium and circulation spaces



> Front elevation, section and ground floor plan of the original scheme



Renfrew Health and Social Care Centre



^ Staircase at main entrance
[Cover Image.]

so that their opinion could form part of the evaluation. The client team also used AEDET to form a structured basis for recording their assessment of each proposal. Holmes Partnership's concept won on the basis of quality. It shone in terms of clarity of vision and diagram, giving a design response that was robust yet flexible enough to accommodate the necessary refinement through consultation with the user groups and clinicians that would follow their appointment as preferred bidder. The new design was welcomed by the Planning Authority who responded very positively to the improvements the scheme would offer to the nature of the town.

The teams agree that the centre was constructed with a much closer working arrangement between the Client, the Contractor and the Designers than might normally be expected in Design and Build, though they're clear that this is due to getting the right people around the table, and the right approach. Their concerted effort is evident in the quality of the building that has been delivered. This was made achievable by an initial budget that was realistic and supported by the benefits of a downward construction market, resulting in little in the way of value engineering despite some changes in the brief to accommodate different services coming to the centre. All involved with the project are commended for their aspirations and determination and are taking the lessons learnt from this hard work to inform forthcoming developments. Key amongst these are:

the need to have someone with an understanding of the way a building 'flows' rather than simply finding out what each service needs then popping them together in a development. Perhaps because the project team inherited a lot of information this view came quite late in the process and impacted things such as the use of the courtyards (due to consulting rooms looking into these areas, the intended patient use of these areas would impact privacy) and future flexibility of the three winged layout impacting the way services in each wing might adapt over time. Stephen Baker, Project Manager for the sees the benefits of the in design statement within SCIM in identifying and briefing this 'flow'.

the value of actively engaging users and the wider community in the detailed design of spaces, from school kids working on the design of stained glass to clinicians looking where the plug socket goes. Although significant time and effort is involved in making this engagement meaningful, it can yield unexpected gains such as when the board's Better Access To Health (BATH) group came up with a simpler access solution.

Despite a less than auspicious start, the new Renfrew Health & Social Work Centre has achieved overwhelming successes. It is a real asset to the services and highly valued by local people. It is even considered miraculous by one of its users; Effie McGahie, who was involved from beginning to end, was initially skeptical about the project but was converted by the scheme and said:

"We are highly delighted with the new centre. It's beautiful, really modern and bright. In fact if you go in feeling unwell, you come out feeling better because it is just so nice inside! Having all the service together under one roof is a major benefit too."

> Upper circulation space



Project Information

Location: Renfrew, Renfrewshire
Delivery Team: Interserve Project Services Ltd and Holmes Partnership
Value: £11m Construction Cost
Opening Date: March 2010
Procurement Type: Design and Build Contract
Client body: NHSGG&C/Renfrewshire CHP

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