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Press release

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Effective management of NHS assets is central to good patient care

An Audit Scotland report published today, *Asset management in the NHS in Scotland*, examines the way the health service strategically manages its £5 billion worth of land and buildings, vehicles, medical and IT equipment.

Assets must be managed effectively to ensure they are being used efficiently and that they are positively supporting the delivery of care. Assets that are in the right place at the right time, suitable for their purpose and well maintained will help patients have a good experience and ensure the NHS achieves value for money from its investment in assets.

Between 2003 and 2011, the Scottish Government will have invested £3 billion in NHS assets. This is helping to fund a number of major redesign and improvement projects aimed at improving NHS assets and helping to shift the balance of care for patients out of hospitals and closer to their homes.

However, not all NHS bodies have clear links between their clinical strategies and their asset strategies that show how healthcare needs are driving the way assets are acquired, used, located and disposed of.

In addition, there is no comprehensive picture of how assets are performing across the country because not all NHS bodies collect information on their assets and the Scottish Government Health Directorates does not routinely monitor performance.

Most of the estate is in satisfactory condition but around a third needs upgrading. Continuing investment by the Scottish Government should partly address this.

Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black, said: "The health service's buildings, land, equipment and other assets are worth a considerable amount of public money - about £5 billion in total - and a significant amount of investment continues to go into them. While NHS bodies are beginning to manage their assets more strategically, they need better information about their condition and performance to ensure that they continue to provide the best health services they can, in the most appropriate settings.

"This is an area where the NHS may be able to achieve greater efficiency, but it is difficult to say on what scale because of the lack of information. The Scottish Government and NHS bodies have begun to take a joint approach to estate management across the public sector. They need to build on this and ensure stronger monitoring of the outcome of capital projects and the performance of assets."

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Notes to editors

1. The report looked at medical equipment costing over £5,000 and vehicles used corporately by NHS bodies. Estate condition is based on information from 11 NHS bodies.
2. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
3. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland.
4. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.