

Dear letters page,

If all has gone according to plan, the contract for a batch of new health care facilities for south-east Hampshire should have been signed by now.

But the completion of that contract - for community hospital in Havant, GP surgeries at Cowplain and Rowner, and other projects - is nine months behind schedule. The reason given - the complexity of writing the contract under which a private company builds health care facilities and then leases it to the NHS. Two hundred legal documents have been drawn up because they need to cover every possible eventuality.

If the NHS needs the owners of the site to do something that's not covered in the contract in 20 years time, then it - or rather us- could be made to pay through the nose.

The improvements to QA will be funded in a similar way. Private companies will find £200million to make the changes, but the NHS will have to pay them five times that amount to use the hospital for 30 years.

Given the difficulty and cost of financing projects in this way, wouldn't it be simpler for the government to borrow the money itself?

Not if you are New Labour. It has to keep public borrowing within set limits if we are ever to join the Euro. Getting private companies to find the capital for projects is a way of doing this - even if it will cost us more in the long run.

So now you know who to blame when the promised facilities are late - this government and its desire to join a currency no-one wants.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Claire Smith

Press officer

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