

HMP Glasgow: Cost of replacement jail for HMP Barlinnie soars to almost £1bn

The cost of HMP Glasgow has more than doubled from its 2019 estimate of £400m to £998.4m. This is nearly 10 times the original 2014 estimate of £100m, which was cited by an auditor to a Holyrood committee in 2023.



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Image:Artist impression of HMP Glasgow. Pic: SPS/Holmes Miller

The projected cost of a new prison replacing Scotland's notorious HMP Barlinnie has more than doubled to almost £1bn.

The opening of HMP Glasgow has also been delayed again to 2028, three years later than originally planned.

The new jail is set to be built in the city's Provanmill and will be able to hold 1,344 prisoners, 357 more than 143-year-old Barlinnie.

Angela Constance, the justice secretary in Scotland, revealed the updated cost of the project as she announced the construction contract had been signed by Kier Construction.



Image:HMP Glasgow is not expected to open until 2028. Pic: SPS/Holmes Miller

In a letter to the criminal justice committee on Wednesday, Ms Constance said the contract had risen to £683.8m (excluding VAT) - taking the total cost to £998.4m, which includes land acquisition.

She wrote: "This is a significant increase from the previous 2019 estimate which calculated that the project would cost at £400m."

The new cost is nearly 10 times the original 2014 estimate of £100m, which was cited by an auditor to a Holyrood committee in 2023.

In response, the Scottish Conservatives branded it a "jaw-dropping admission" as it accused the SNP of "squandering taxpayers' money on a scandalous scale".

Ms Constance said the overall cost was in line with similar projects elsewhere in the UK, citing the effects of inflation caused by Brexit and the COVID pandemic.



Image:Angela Constance cited the effects of inflation caused by Brexit and the pandemic. Pic: PA

The justice secretary said: "HMP Glasgow is a bold vision for the future of Scottish [prisons](#) that will help reduce reoffending, contribute to less crime, while delivering a considerable economic boost for the city and beyond.

"The new modern establishment will replace a Victorian-age prison that is no longer fit for purpose.

"It will increase prison capacity and transform how prisoners are rehabilitated, as well as considerably improving staff working conditions."

The developer has committed to providing local employment, including apprenticeships, training and work placements for ex-offenders, as well as supporting local businesses.

Ms Constance said the project will deliver £450m worth of economic benefits, with 50% of the project spend expected to benefit the local supply chain.

She added: "The project's cost has been extensively scrutinised, with independent benchmarking analysis finding the costs are comparable with similar prison projects elsewhere in the UK."



Image:HMP Barlinnie has been deemed 'not fit for purpose'. Pic: PA

Barlinnie is [Scotland's](#) largest prison and houses male inmates.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) previously reported it is no longer fit for purpose.

It comes amid overcrowding concerns across the nation's prison estate.

According to the latest Scottish Prison Service (SPS) data, Scotland's prison population was 8,260 on 31 January - above the target operating capacity of 8,007.

A number of measures have been taken to ease the pressure, including the early release of prisoners - [which will continue this month](#).

HMP [Glasgow](#) was initially scheduled to open in 2025, but that was pushed back a year before this latest delay.

The Scottish Conservatives are calling for Ms Constance to make a statement to the Scottish parliament on the cost of the new jail.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr MSP added: "This is a jaw-dropping admission from the SNP justice secretary.

"The SNP are squandering taxpayers' money on a scandalous scale, and the public are going to pay a colossal price for the nationalists' financial incompetence."