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The number of beds at a key hospital being “deliberately downgraded” by the SNP has fallen by 15 per cent, new figures have shown.

The Scottish Conservatives said the drop in beds at the Perth Royal Infirmary since 2013 proves the Scottish Government has been “chipping away” at the crucial facility.

Last week, new health secretary Jeane Freeman confirmed all new emergency admissions would be diverted to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, impacting hundreds of patients a month.

That confirmed fears from local campaigners in Perth that the hospital was being slowly downgraded in favour of a more centralised approach in a different city.

Now research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed the gradual cut in beds at the hospital.

In 2013, there were an average of 251 beds available for patients at the hospital.

But by March this year, that had fallen to just 213.

Scottish Conservative Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Liz Smith said:

“Patients and staff in Perth have suspected the SNP has government has been chipping away at the PRI for years.

“These worrying figures on bed numbers prove that.

“The SNP has denied this deliberate downgrading of a key hospital, but the statistics and the latest announcements prove that as a deception.

“The PRI is a crucial facility serving one of the busiest areas of the country.

“As well as these bed cuts, the PRI has also lost maternity, paediatric, pathology and emergency surgery – all at a time when out of hours services are being cut and concerns remain over GP cover.

“The SNP government should be working to strengthen its role, not treating it like a second class facility.”

Notes to editors:

Below are the number of average available beds at the PRI by year:

March 2013 – 250.9

March 2014 – 240.5

March 2015 – 243.8

March 2016 – 232.6

March 2017 – 221.3

March 2018 – 212.7

Source:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Hospital-Care/Publications/2018-06-26/Acute-Hospital-Publication/data-explorer/>

The Scottish Government announced the downgrade of the PRI's emergency department last week:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/perth-kinross/684102/campaign-launches-against-downgrading-of-perth-ae/>