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Hospital sell-offs top £350m

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More than £350m of NHS assets were sold off last year, with English Partnerships buying the bulk for regeneration projects.

The sales, which have increased 14-fold from 2004/2005, were revealed in the House of Commons this week, following a request from the Conservative Party.

English Partnerships' £280m purchase of 78 hospitals contributed most of the sales, while housing developer Raven Group bought the High Royd's asylum in Menston, West Yorkshire, for £27m and Bovis Homes bought the St Margaret's Hospital in Walsall for £13.25m.

The Tories are calling for an investigation into the "massive" property sell-off of hospitals.

Mark Francois, shadow paymaster general, said: "It is the government's massive deficit that is pushing along the assets sales programme and this has major implications for land held by a variety of government departments, not least the NHS. If Gordon Brown wasn't borrowing so much, he might not need to flog off so much to pay for it."

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