

Letter from Builth Hospital Friends to Assembly Members Brian Gibbons, Kirsty Williams, Nick Bourne.

Builth Hospital Casualty Closure (10/11/06)

Dear Sirs

Can I implore you to help us fight the proposals to close Builth Hospital? As you are aware for several years now, a group has been working in Builth to develop proposals for the future shape of health services.

This group produced a preferred option based on a model that involved co-operation between the County Council in terms of Social Services provision and the Health Service insuring a retention of as many primary care based facilities as possible in Builth together with access to inpatient beds.

Indeed at a Public Meeting held in Builth in November 2005, where your representative and over 600 people attended, the Chief Executive of the Local Health Board (LHB) informed the packed audience that this indeed would be his proposal.

Yet nearly 12 months later the actual proposals put to the Board on 27 September 2006 were the worst possible outcome for Builth & District and far worse than even the most sceptical of us expected.

We were prepared for the fact that there were going to be changes but not the total closure of Builth Cottage Hospital which has served our community for well over a 100 years and still continues to provide a warm, caring and professional and above all personal standards of care, and continues to be an essential part of our community.

The concept of local care teams put forward by the LHB has been largely rejected by general practices in Powys. The professionals believe that it has not been clearly thought out, is under funded and will prove to be a largely bureaucratic exercise. Looking at the proposals for Builth, it would appear that the LHB have not considered how other services currently operated from Builth Wells will be replaced. For example where are the the wide range of inpatient palliative care services currently provided going to be undertaken in the future.

There seems to be no effective plan for transitional arrangements to ensure that services provided to patients in this locality will be maintained in the future.

The LHB very sneakily and to their shame closed the Minor Injuries Unit in Builth yesterday (Friday) because of an alledged lack of trained and qualified staff. All emergencies being sent to Llandrindod, and what do we find:

On duty in Llandod casualty yesterday evening, working alone, was an SEN, no MIU qualifications....whilst a fully qualified RGN nurse with extensive casualty experience was on duty in Builth. What on earth is happening _ We MUST SURELY call into question the ability of those running the LHB.

I and the Friends of the Hospital are extremely disappointed with the LHB's proposals. There has been a huge amount of input from our community, both lay and professional medical staff through meetings, conferences, work groups etc. and yet the LHB have seemed to have ignored all this input.

But perhaps the most worrying thing of all is that there does not appear to be a strategy developed or even considered by the LHB to ensure that effective transitional arrangements are in place to provide services to patients in our community when these are withdrawn as a result of closure of in patient and minor injuries and out patient facilities at Builth Hospital.

As a community we have, I believe, demonstrated our willingness to discuss openly our aspirations for future medical care in Builth, and indeed we do not oppose change, providing it meets our local needs.

Sadly the LHB's proposals show that our community efforts to inform and influence have been completely ineffective and ignored. There is a Welsh Assembly Election in the New Year and I know people in Builth & Llanwrtyd will be following closely the efforts of you and your political opponents in fighting for our area.

We may be few in numbers but we need the same level and timely access to Health Care that our fellow citizens have in the more densely populated areas of the Principality.

Without Builth Hospital, patients will travel more when they are ill; we will have to rely more on overcrowded hospitals such as Hereford or Nevill Hall; we will all rely more on the overworked ambulance service; any admission to Llandrindod or Brecon will lose that continuity of care from Builth GPs.

So we must unite with other Powys communities to safeguard and develop the precious elements of the healthcare system that has served us so well over the years.

Please help us.

Yours,

Rev Phil Morris "Friends" of Builth Hospital