

P-05-826 - Pembrokeshire says NO!! To the closure of Withybush A&E! – Correspondence – David Williams to Committee, 25.03.19

To the Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comments with regard to P-05-826 Pembrokeshire says NO!! To the closure of Withybush A&E!.

The new build, if approved, will result in Withybush A & E being downgraded to minor injuries unit & nearest A & E will be a minimum 20 mins from Haverfordwest. This can be much longer during summer/tourist season, inclement winter weather, traffic accidents closing road or slow moving agricultural/HGV vehicles – there is no dual carriageway and only alternative to A40 are minor roads.

Those to west can currently take 30 mins after collection by ambulance to reach Haverfordwest so moving of A & E from Withybush will mean many taking over an hour to arrive at A & E on top of response time which due to above reasons can be quite long. It is not unrealistic to estimate that from 999 call received to reaching New Hospital A & E it will normally take a minimum of 1 hour 10 mins and could frequently be double that. I accept that we have to travel for non-urgent specialist treatment but A & E is for urgent life-threatening treatment and moving 20-30 mins travel time further away for those who already can take 30 mins to reach current one is going to cost lives and/or create disabilities which will cost more long term.

Pembrokeshire has a huge increase in population during summer months (Tenby alone goes from 5000 in winter to 95,000 in tourist season) and has much more industry than adjacent county's with Milford Docks, Valero, LNG etc with accompanying risk.

Haverfordwest has catchment area of 80,000 compared to Carmarthen's 40,000. Carmarthen has dual carriageway/motorway to Swansea so is much quicker to get to although same distance as H'west to Carms. Carmarthenshire's' largest town catchment is Llanelli Also 80,00 but only about 10-15 mins from Swansea again on good roads.

The stated problems are recruitment & Glangwili being old & not fit for purpose. While there was a national recruitment problem but until Withybush future was threatened it bucked the trend and had no major recruitment problems unlike Glangwili. In fact the 2 nurses needed for SCBU had applicants but health board refused to fund. They tried to solve problem by moving services & staff to Glangwili instead of learning why Withybush could recruit and applying to Glangwili. Now because most of transferred staff have left they still have a problem.

Given history why do they think they will be able to recruit to new hospital. They think combining current consultants etc in one place will solve staff/rota issues but unless these staff are currently standing idle some off the time, which from my observation is not true, it does not hold water.

To me the long-term answer is to fund more (at least double) the medical training places. There is no shortage of applicants as latest figures I have seen are 3500 applicants for 300 places in Cardiff and similar % for Swansea. Give applicants the choice of funding totally themselves and be free to go where they like when qualified or totally free training if they sign to work in Welsh NHS for 10 years. This would prevent trainees taking bursaries/grants for training and then going overseas or working as locums/agency when qualified. This would not be as expensive as sounds as it would reduce the vast current expenditure on agency/locum. A larger number of qualifies applying for same number of places would mean more having to work outside the city areas. It would also save the many hundreds of millions of new build.

The health board say we cannot look at past or go back but that is how we learn from our mistakes and correct them, otherwise we keep exacerbating the errors and continue going further in wrong direction.

David Williams