

SAVE NORTH DEVON'S HOSPITAL SERVICES



PRESS RELEASE DEVON SEES RED DAY - 22 October 2016

Approximately 4000 people of all ages arrived in Barnstaple, from babies in prams to pensioners in their 90s to turn the High Street into a red line of anger at threatened cuts by the *Northern, Eastern, Western Devon, Healthcare Trust* to the acute services at *North Devon District Hospital* (NDDH). These include the stroke, maternity, neonatal and paediatric units. Many organisations including trade unions, the Women's Institute, social groups, and political parties all came together as part of the *Save Our Hospitals Services Devon* campaign.

In a carnival atmosphere the red line wound its way through the historic Pannier Market and back to the High Street. The Square was so full that people were lining up alongside the River Taw. There were several messages of support from other campaigns to save hospital services eg from Cumbria and Lincolnshire.

Speaker after speaker emphasised the danger to lives if any of the services at NDDH were removed to hospitals in either Plymouth or Exeter. Travelling times and the problems of weather and traffic conditions would lead to deaths. Speakers also emphasised that they opposed cuts not just here in North Devon but elsewhere in the county and beyond.

North Devon MP Peter Heaton-Jones was left in no doubt as to the feelings of the marchers, as he fought from the stage to make himself heard above the repeated cry of 'no cuts' from the crowd, to explain his position claiming that he is fully supportive of the campaign.

Seven year old Jacob Egan followed 12 year old speaker Alena Cartmell to the stage and read a letter, which he told his mum he was writing to the Prime Minister after needing treatment at NDDH in the early hours last weekend. He wrote "It isn't a good choice to shut the children's and maternity departments. . . I have been to the hospital many times. . . I get what you are thinking, you could save money, but if you shut down our hospital you would have to spend more money in Exeter and on ambulances because people would have to travel a longer distance. It could be very dangerous"

The campaign group is meeting this week to consider the next steps. There is a long road ahead. This sent a powerful message to NEW Devon Healthcare Trust that any cuts to the services at NDDH will not be tolerated. "We are the red line against these cuts" said last speaker, Netti Pearson
ENDS

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