



Save Our Hospital Services www.sohs.org.uk

NEWS Redlines

 Save Our Hospital Services Devon

WELCOME

With this edition of Redlines, we come to the end of something which has been a tradition for the last year, that of producing an almost weekly copy of Redlines. The tight production schedule had meant that the end of every week was spent producing the latest copy. Sadly, in a way, this is the last weekly Redlines, as I am taking time out to catch up on some of the things I had to leave aside. I could not have made this journey without you, the reader, and over the last few months I have got to feel that I know at least a few of you, even though we have never met. I have had emails from readers, and I have been privileged to be treated as a friend. Of course you can still write to me using the same emails, as I am not going totally away, just taking a break.

So for now it is a temporary goodbye, but also a big thankyou for joining me alongside this campaign.

Stephen

Material for future newsletters
editor@sohs.co.uk by Thursday
SOHS-Save Our Hospital
Services
(A non- party group whose aim is
to campaign to protect our
health services in North Devon)



No. 37 - 24 June 2017

V•i•c•t•o•r•y

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.
Winston Churchill

The meeting of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee on Monday yielded a surprising result and a victory for the SOHS campaign to save hospital services. The announced recommendations that A&E, Maternity, Stroke and Paediatrics will continue at Barnstaple, together with Exeter, Torquay and Plymouth can be seen as a major step forward. This result would not have been achieved without the help and support of people all across Devon. For a while, at least, the thin red line of people could be seen in many areas publicising the needs and making the plans known. Things which were meant to be enacted by stealth were revealed in the open, as campaigners researched and worked tirelessly on the campaign. On behalf of all the activists, I would want to join in offering my thanks for your support and campaigning.

This decision will save lives, and will mean that you and your family can look forward to a more assured future. It means that when you have urgent medical needs, such as after an accident, you know that help is at hand. For expectant mothers, it will be a relief to know that they do not have to make an extra push to get to Exeter, and for stroke care needs, it must be encouraging to know that help is at hand, and not far away in Plymouth. For families of patients, or even just friends, visiting will be so much easier;

the flowers will not have wilted and the grapes got squashed before you get to the patient's bedside. For almost every age, and every person, this is great and welcome news.

We must not forget the staff either. We value our NHS staff, many of them working to provide service above and beyond. They are our angels in our time of need, and it must have been very difficult for them, working in uncertain conditions.

For many, this must seem like the time to hang up the red suits

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Published by Devon Save Our Hospital Services
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Postal Address: 70 Newport Road, Barnstaple EX32 9BG
Email: admin@SOHS.org.uk
Graphic Design: Paradox www.paradoxuk.com

and move on. The future is blue. But hold on, for this is not the end, just a move to a new phase. We must remember that there are still plans to close wards and shut beds. There have already been cuts and changes which have inflicted damage on our communities. We still have to face the leviathan of Care in the Community. The battle is not over.

In addition, the fact that sweeping changes are not being made, does not mean that small changes will not be made here and there. This steady drip might be scarcely noticeable, but the cumulative result will. Seasoned campaigners know the difficulty of fighting a long slow campaign. It becomes more difficult to rouse the troops and rally the support. There is always the argument, "Well, it's only a little change".

The larger problem has not been solved. The lack of funding has not miraculously vanished and nobody has found the magic

money tree. Cuts will still have to be made, unless we can persuade the government to allocate more money to health care. I, for one, have always argued that this country should put adequate funding into health care, per capita, and I know there are others who share that opinion.

Will SOHS now wind up and take down the campaign tent? There are certainly no plans to do that, and for now the motto seems to be, "Be vigilant". Campaign meetings will take place, and there will be events from time to time, with campaigners ready to step up to the mark when necessary.

It might now be an appropriate time to just to reflect how we got here. A long time ago, so it seems, a group of concerned people came together. They were people from a variety of backgrounds, and of distinctly different political persuasion. In other circumstances they might not be talking with each other, but the task was so great they

focused on the job in hand and put their differences aside. Some of the newly formed campaign group had already been campaigning for STITCH (Save the Irreplaceable Torrington Community Hospital), others had no campaign experience. The

name Save Our Hospital Services was coined. There was some discussion as to whether it should have North Devon or Devon added after it, and of course it spread through Devon. Events were planned at which leaflets could be distributed. Various campaign tactics were regularly discussed and implemented with emails flying around in the time between the main meetings.

When I joined, my first task was to design a logo. I wanted something that was simple, but expressed the gist of the campaign. After a few false starts, the logo took shape in my mind as I saw the bold red letters spelling out SOS – help, and the familiar H for hospital sign, but using a slightly broken format, it expressed what might become. I was delighted that the logo was well received and became a well-known symbol of the campaign.

Our first "big" march was from Pilton Park to the Community Hospital. A group of a few hundred people came together, and this was the first time the red outfits appeared. The idea had arisen as a response to the Success Regime claim that there were "no red lines". The retort of SOHS was that there were red lines and we would fight for them. Looking back at that march, not everyone had yet assembled their red outfits, and the procession along the road to the North Devon District Hospital was a little bit wobbly, but the speeches were



Diary Dates

Visit the diary page on the website for more dates, fuller details and maps

Saturday 1 July SOHS Open Mic Night, 20.30, Reform Inn, Pilton. Sing, Play and celebrate our unity in the fight for our NHS

Wednesday 5 July 17.30 Celebration in Torrington Square for the 69th birthday of the NHS. All welcome

Thursday 6 July 13.00- 17.00, NEW Devon CCG Governing Body meeting, venue to be advised The public are

welcome to attend meetings. To book a place or for more info: 01392 267 670 or 01392 267 638 d-ccg.corporateservices@nhs.net

Wednesday 12 July Note correction of date 19.00 SOHS AGM. The Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple EX31 1DR

Tuesday 1 August 10.00-13.00 Note change of time, Northern Devon Healthcare Trust Board meeting, Chichester Boardroom, North Devon District Hospital

Don't forget to send us your dates to include in the diary. If people don't know, they won't attend

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great and rousing. Red ribbon was used as a visual representation of the red line. All in all, it was a successful day.

The next big public march was attended by even greater numbers. I was given the task of designing a poster to promote the day, and I came up with this image of a red line of people threaded along the length of Barnstaple High Street. I am not sure whether we managed to achieve a line down the entire street in reality, but what was achieved was a huge outpouring of support with a very definite message given to TPTB (The Powers That Be). Other Red



of the earlier report. Some thought that this was a deliberate move to remove detail and make things more unclear. There were plans, it was just that nobody really knew what the plans were.

We were able to join with campaigners from other areas at a great rally in London

held back in March. Coachloads of campaigners converged from all areas of the country, and as usual our people were resplendent in red.

In the meantime, we held public meetings, taking the opportunity of informing people what was going on. We also recruited local Champions who helped promote the campaign in their area.

We also celebrated April Fools Day with an event called "You Can't Fool Us". I think that is one that I am going to remember every year. The march retraced the steps of the first march from Pilton Park to the hospital, but this time there were corresponding marches at hospitals throughout Devon. We have pictures of all the different marches on the website, and some are shown here.



That brings us more or less to the present, although there has been much left out. We have not mentioned the SOHS dragon or Santa's campaign. We have not covered the development of Redlines which has run to almost 40 glorious issues, nor have we spoken of the Facebook pages, or indeed all the terrific hard

work that went on behind the scenes: leaflets distributed, banners made, meetings attended, letters written, and so much more done. Some people worked astonishingly hard, but every contribution made a huge difference. I would hesitate in thanking anybody in particular as I would be sure

to leave someone out, but each one of you has been an important part of the campaign, so thank you.

But as we say, it is not over. We may yet have more work to do and more campaigning to come. Of this we can be sure, that when the need arises the Red Line Warriors will once again fearlessly venture forth.

Stephen



Line days followed, and by now campaigning had spread to the whole of Devon.

The publication of the first STP report was analysed in detail by SOHS campaigners, so it was something of a surprise when the second STP report came out and seemed to omit much of the detail

