

Transport experts slam Withybush closure plan

The one size fits all' solution to health care in mid and west Wales simply doesn't work.

That's the stark conclusion of an expert transport working group of the county's health watchdog, Pembrokeshire Community Health Council.

The three-strong group - civil engineers Gary Hicks and Henry Jones and retired paramedic ambulance officer Stan Spinner - analysed the two health options presented to the people of Pembrokeshire.

Both options were soundly rejected by local communities at crowded consultation meetings.

Option One meant closing Withybush Hospital, and replacing Withybush and Carmarthen's Glangwili with a new hospital at Whitland.

Option Two included downgrading of Withybush, and expansion of services at Carmarthen.

The Designed to Deliver document made vague assessments that both options will have some impact on access times to acute hospitals... the average travel time to hospital would marginally increase overall'.

But the trio of experts produced some interesting statistics which led them to conclude both options were seriously flawed'.

The group looked at the population and how it fluctuated; accessibility for patients, their families and staff; and transport for all three counties.

As a result of their extensive research, they concluded there was a strong case for retaining and expanding services at Withybush.

They cited Withybush's large catchment area; good local infrastructure; good transport links within the county; predicted large population growth; highest summer population in the region; high risk industrial facilities; and good capability for expansion.

They concluded by urging the NHS regional office to realise that Pembrokeshire's unique characteristics means the one size fits all' approach will not work.



*The CHC Transport Group, Gary Hicks, Henry Jones and Stan Spinner.
PICTURE: Western Telegraph*