

Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee

2 September 2020

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter of 10 August requesting a formal response to the petition published on the Senedd Petitions website on 16 July under the heading "Hold an Independent inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre".

Since then, a new petition supporting the new Velindre Cancer Centre has been published on the Senedd website with a closing date of 24 September. As I write, it has attracted over 7000 signatures. I look forward to hearing the Committee's views on whether the two petitions should be considered together given they address the same subject, albeit from different perspectives.

This submission provides a response to the substantive issues raised by the petition. It also provides background information on the new Velindre Cancer Centre project which the committee might find helpful.

Background - playing our part in transforming cancer services in South East Wales

There are more and more people being diagnosed with cancer. The system as it stands is not working as best it should – and Velindre University NHS Trust has a critical role in improving outcomes for cancer patients in Wales.

The 60 year-old Velindre Cancer Centre does not have the facilities or space we need. There is no space for future development. We're not giving every patient the best possible service joined up close to home wherever they live. And we're not preventing enough cancer in the first place.

So, across the system, whatever our roles and wherever we are based, organisations are coming together to improve cancer services.

Following considerable engagement with patients, staff and our regional NHS Wales partners, the Welsh Government approved a strategic outline programme to establish the Transforming Cancer Services programme.

Improving patient outcomes is at the heart of the programme and what we do. It's the starting point for our service model for cancer services today and the services we're developing for the future. We want high quality cancer treatments to be easy to access for patients across south east Wales and for the care offered to be excellent.

That means working with our partners to look at opportunities to integrate services better. We want to play our part in improving the whole cancer pathway for patients from cancer awareness and prevention to early diagnosis and treatment and we want to support people who are living with the impact of cancer palliative care and advance care planning.

We also want to work collaboratively with academic partners across Wales and beyond to ensure Wales plays its part in internationally renowned cancer research, development and innovation. Velindre already plays a key role in international research but our current 60 year old cancer centre does not portray the right image to meet the ambitions of the organisation or indeed Wales.

We believe that a leading role in research, development and innovation will contribute directly to a sustainable future for the Welsh oncology workforce and so secure the development of cancer services fit for future generations.

Working to these principles, the Transforming Cancer Services programme has been tasked with delivering four key services changes for cancer patients in south east Wales:

- at home: more care, support and treatment in people's homes if they so wish
- a small number of purposely designed 'Velindre @' locations on Health Board sites, referred to as Velindre outreach facilities
- a Radiotherapy Satellite Unit to be located at Nevill Hall Hospital in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- a new specialist non-surgical cancer centre to replace the existing Velindre Cancer Centre.

The northern meadows site

The northern meadows was selected because it is NHS owned land where the principle of development is already well established and agreed. Cardiff Council

granted planning permission for housing on the site in 2001 and in 2018 it also granted outline planning permission for a new cancer centre.

The site's proximity to the M4 and A470 means that it provides easier access for three quarters of our patients who travel to us from across south east Wales. They, like many of our staff, will no longer have to travel into the village of Whitchurch.

The site provides the space and quality of outlook which will help our patients and their wellbeing at difficult and anxious times.

The site was selected after reviewing other potential options available in the wider NHS estate.

We identified potential sites at Llanfrechfa Grange, north of Newport, land opposite the Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport and land adjoining the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) in Cardiff. These sites do not provide what we need. The Newport sites were not geographically suitable because we provide cancer services to people living as far west as Bridgend with many of our patients living in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Cardiff areas. The site near UHW was too small for our needs.

Contrary to the petition wording, Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board has not offered us land by the Heath to develop a new cancer centre and there are no confirmed plans for a "new build" starting in 2023. The site for a new University Hospital of Wales has not yet been agreed. I understand that the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is at the start of the Programme Business Case and as part of that process there will be a need to do a site options appraisal. That has not been done yet and will take some time to complete.

We also reviewed the possibility of building on the current Whitchurch Hospital but this was too small to construct the cancer centre to the required standards. It is also listed which makes it difficult to redevelop as a modern cancer centre.

Land to the south west of Whitchurch Hospital has outline planning permission for a hospital but is too small.

Following our outline planning permission for a cancer centre on the northern meadows site, we submitted two further planning applications to Cardiff Council on 9 June 2020 to revise access roads to the new Velindre Cancer Centre which will reduce overall costs and bring forward the opening date.

The petition refers to a cost of £26.9 million to deliver these roads. This description is incorrect. The figure covers the cost of all our enabling works for the site, not just roads. Enabling works include tasks such as excavation, levelling, site surveys, drainage and the connection of utilities as well as roads and bridges for improved access, the widening of the slip-road directly off the Coryton roundabout and further improvements to help ease traffic flow in the area.

The petition also refers to the Northern Meadows site as “this land-locked meadow.” This is also incorrect. The Northern Meadows are accessible from the south, through the Whitchurch Hospital site. The land was previously used as part of the hospital site. The aforementioned planning permission for housing on the northern meadows proposes an access road through the Whitchurch Hospital site.

Clinical model development

The clinical model which underpins the Transforming Cancer Services programme has been developed in partnership with our regional colleagues, our staff, stakeholders and patients.

The first phase of engagement ran between April and August 2015 and included the voices of over 400 participants. These engagement events were supplemented with input from three national groups – the NHS Wales Directors of Planning, Nursing and Medical Directors respectively. During these events, all participants were asked to provide feedback in terms of how services could be improved and importantly to identify which elements of the current service model they felt we should retain.

A number of key findings and themes emerged from these initial engagement events and they were used to inform the process of developing a detailed clinical service model of care. Fundamental to the development of the service model was the establishment of a clear set of clinical principles which included (i) offering high quality and equitable non-surgical cancer care to the population of south east

Wales (ii) improving patient outcomes (iii) reducing the inequalities in those outcomes across the region, and (iv) delivering care closer to home.

This clinical service model was further developed through extensive internal meetings, engagement events with patient and public involvement and a series of workshops with health board cancer leads and wider stakeholder groups (universities, industry, third sector etc.) This involved 49 workshops during 2016 – 2017. Through these events we were able to further develop and enhance the service model which was described in the Strategic Outline Programme and this was presented within the Programme Business Case.

The patient voice was prominent in this process. Patients told us they want services as close to home as possible but they do not mind travelling for specialist services. They said they want the same quality of care and experience wherever the service is provided, that they want to be able to find it and park easily and have good access to spaces for quiet reflection.

We also established a Clinical Advisory Group which had senior clinical representation from health boards and from the Wales Cancer Network. The remit of this group was to ensure that the service model was clinically robust and to provide multi-disciplinary and organisational advice and challenge to the Trust.

The clinical service model is one which supports the broader regional model of care for South East Wales e.g. a network of cancer services. It was set out within the Outline Business Case for the new Velindre Cancer Centre which was formally approved by all health boards (Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Powys Teaching Health Board, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Swansea Bay University LHB and Hywel Dda University Health Board) and the Velindre University NHS Trust Board in April 2018.

We are constantly seeking to evolve and refine our service model to ensure alignment across the region and so that it delivers high quality and safe care every day.

We are currently undertaking work with our colleagues in health boards to identify improvements we may need to make both at a local Velindre Cancer Centre service

level and regional, systemic level. This will take account of a number of external factors including the impact and learning from COVID-19, changes in clinical practice within the region and broader evidence base, areas for potential improvement raised by staff and LHB/Wales Cancer Network cancer strategies and plans.

On a local Velindre Cancer Centre level, we are currently concentrating on a small number of areas including research and development, training and education. A significant piece of work is being undertaken in partnership with colleagues from health boards and the Trust on unscheduled care and acute oncology services to deliver a joined-up, appropriate regional response. Any improvements identified by all work streams will be used to supplement and strengthen the regional model we have agreed with health boards and feed into our current plans.

In November 2019 we established the Collaborative Cancer Leadership Group (CCLG) in south east Wales. This group, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has met twice, due to COVID19, and includes members from the other health boards in South East Wales. It is responsible for leading the regional approach to system design and delivery supported by the NHS Wales Chief Executive Group.

All these developments will help us deliver services that are fit for cancer patients today and develop cancer services fit for future generations.

Conclusion

The development of the new Velindre Cancer Centre has been part of a long and robust process engaging hundreds of patients, staff and partners at dozens and dozens of events over many years. It's one part of a programme to transform cancer services and improve cancer outcomes across south east Wales.

All of the reviews and consultations we have undertaken confirm that our clinical model is the correct one for the needs of the population we serve and that the location of the new Velindre Cancer Centre on the Northern Meadows site is the most effective and timely means of delivering that clinical model.



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Above all, we are confident that our proposals are what will work best for our patients. The patient voice has been loud and clear in the process. Velindre has an excellent record in patient safety and patient satisfaction and patients want this experience further improved in a modern building on a green site. Patients in their thousands have expressed their support for the new cancer centre in Whitchurch.

Finally, I'd like to clarify that the petition refers to our organisation as Velindre University Health Board. We are Velindre University NHS Trust. The Trust directs the strategy and performance of our two main Divisions, Velindre Cancer Centre and the Welsh Blood Service, and host Health Technology Wales, NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership and NHS Wales Informatics Service. Our blood and transplantation services are delivered across Wales and our cancer services are commissioned by our partners, the Local Health Boards of south east Wales.

I hope you find the information included helpful as you consider the petition. I would be happy to provide you with any further information if required or deemed helpful,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Mead', with a horizontal line underneath.

Professor Donna Mead OBE
Chair of Velindre University NHS Trust