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23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026

Dear Patient of Fowey River Practice,

We are writing to you as a Patient, or householder, who is registered with Fowey River Practice. We would be grateful if you could share this information with anyone in your household who is registered with the Surgery.

We have reviewed how we might maintain and enhance services for our whole patient population and this process has led us to decide to start a consultation process with you about how we might consolidate and improve service provision. As part of this review, we would like to consider a possible change to how we provide services for our Polruan patients, including the possibility of closing our Polruan Branch Surgery.

The decision to open this consultation and engagement process has been discussed internally in the Practice over many years. It is not made lightly and has involved a huge amount of thought and soul searching. We understand that this announcement may generate uncertainty and upset.

There are a number of reasons why we are exploring the option of closing Polruan Surgery:

1. We have significant concerns about the site. We have been unable to resolve a number of patient access and safety issues at Polruan Surgery. Some of these are detailed here. There are no providers of clinical waste disposal who will service the site, due to its location on the quay. Similarly, the medication suppliers for the dispensary are increasingly reluctant to provide medications due to the geography and the size of the dispensary. There is no dedicated patient parking for the surgery, particularly challenging given its location at the bottom of the hill. Wheelchair and pram access is difficult, if not impossible with the narrow doorways. We have concerns about maintaining patient confidentiality because of the structure of the building. There are steep narrow stairs up to the nursing treatment room. The fire exit from the upstairs consulting room is particularly hazardous. We have health and safety concerns and issues for our staff in the building.
2. Quality and Access to appropriate Care. Concentrating our workforce on fewer sites would help us maintain safer workloads, allow increased equity of access to clinicians with different skill sets for all our patients and support continuity of care.
3. Workforce and Recruitment. There are national and local difficulties in recruiting staff to work in Primary Care. This is true for GPs, Nurses, allied health professionals as well as reception and secretarial staff. Our experience and recent attempts at recruitment tells us staff prefer to work in a supported environment within a larger team.
4. Financial sustainability. Rising costs have not been matched by increases in core funding over a prolonged period. The Partners are personally and jointly liable for ensuring the

financial viability of the Practice. We must manage our resources carefully to avoid financial instability and ensure the continued success of the whole Practice. A significant number of GP Practices have amalgamated, or even had to close, in the last few years due to a combination of the factors mentioned here. Our key aim is to ensure the sustainability and resilience of Fowey River Practice so that we continue to serve our whole patient population.

5. The specific challenges faced by Fowey River Practice include:

- Over the last 15 years we have had a 27% increase in registered Patients. This increase in numbers is most marked at our Par Site which now looks after 5,000 patients (up from 3,500). In Fowey we have seen an increase from 2,400 to 3,000. Our registered patients in Polruan have dropped from 650 to 490.
- There is good national and local data to suggest that there has been a 30% increase in consultation rate since the pandemic. We have noticed the same trend here and we have a significant number of patients who now consult >50 times per annum.
- Dispensing. We used to dispense medication to nearly all our patients in Polruan. Over the last few years NHS England have rigidly enforced their decision not to allow us to dispense to any patient who lives within a mile of Fowey Chemist (disregarding the fact that there is a river that lies between!) This means that we can only legally dispense to a shrinking group of people. This impacts the financial viability of providing dispensing services to the remaining patients. The decrease in numbers means that our medication wholesalers regard us as a lower priority and hence we must increase our stocks to ensure continuity of supply. All these factors mean that we have been running the Dispensary at a loss for some years.
- Premises. As outlined above, Polruan Surgery does not meet the standards of a modern medical facility. Unfortunately, it is not possible to upgrade the facilities to the necessary standard and leaves us vulnerable to censure from the Care Quality Commission.

6. The NHS 10-year Plan and Political Imperatives. The current government have outlined changes to the way General Practice and Primary Care will provide care over the coming years. These changes incorporate many developments that patients will welcome including expanding and improving ways of accessing care, a focus on prevention and delivering care “at scale” through Primary Care Networks (PCN) and latterly the piloting of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INT)

Fowey River Practice has been instrumental in developing the way local Practices interact together within our PCN. The 4 Practices (Bosvena, Fowey River Practice, Lostwithiel and Middleway) together look after c 45,000 Patients. We provide a significant amount of the clinical and managerial leadership of the PCN.

The scale of the PCN has allowed the development of a number of different teams to provide services and care that would not be possible for the smaller individual Practices. The smaller size of the individual Practices does allow Practice based relationships and a better opportunity for continuity of care.

To give some examples:

- We have a number of GPs who work across the PCN improving the resilience of the individual practices.

- Our Frailty team fast tracks access to services and support for our frailest patients and facilitates their ability to be cared for at home.
- Our Pharmacy team supports other clinicians in their prescribing activities and increasingly monitors the safety of medicine use and the quality of clinical activity.
- Our Paramedic team visits patients who need assessment at home. This allows GPs to prioritise their time to those patients needing more sophisticated care and management at home.
- Our Diabetic team provides an enhanced education for those at risk of diabetes, new diabetics and those with more complicated issues with management. They work closely with our Health Coach to encourage activity in the diabetic group but also patients more generally.
- We have some first contact physiotherapists who see patients with new presentations of musculoskeletal problems and release time for our GPs and Advanced Nurse Practitioners.
- Our Social Prescribers encourage inclusion and provide extra support for isolated patients.

We have been awarded one of the first wave pilot sites for INTs. These will allow multidisciplinary teams to work together to improve care for our patients and most importantly promote more care being given locally as opposed to in hospital. Hopefully, this will make a significant difference to patient outcomes and satisfaction, but it does come at a significant cost in clinical and managerial oversight.

We want to reassure all our patients:

- You will remain registered with Fowey River Practice, unless you choose to investigate your options.
- We will continue to provide GP and other appointments at our Fowey and Par sites.
- Home visiting to our housebound or unwell patients will continue uninterrupted.
- We will review access issues and consider options to support patients who find transport difficult.
- We will work with our Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the NHS locally to minimise disruption and maintain safe access to care.
- Your care remains our top priority. We are committed to providing high quality care for you all in the future.

### **What Happens next?**

We will be starting a period of consultation and patient engagement over the next 12 weeks. This will finish on 17/04/2026 and after this we will consider the responses and engage with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) as to the potential next steps.

Any changes we propose, including a potential branch site closure will be designed to protect services for all 8,400 of our patients, to ensure the sustainability and security of the Practice and to work within the vision of an NHS of the future.

### **Hearing your voice:**

You can share your views in the following ways:

Write to us at: Fowey River Practice, Rawlings Lane, Fowey PL23 1DT

Email us at: [fowey.engagement@nhs.net](mailto:fowey.engagement@nhs.net)

Paper feedback forms will be available from the 3 surgery sites between 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026 – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Via an online survey: This will be available the same as above, details for how to access this, will be released shortly

We will be organising a Public Meeting in Polruan and will publish details within the next few weeks, please keep an eye on our website and social media.

**PLEASE** - To ensure we maintain a timely and safe service to all patients. Please **DO NOT** contact our reception or telephone teams to discuss or challenge the potential branch closure.

Our front desk and call handling staff are not involved in making these decisions and are unable to change the outcome. Additional calls and questions about the proposal risks delaying care for patients with immediate clinical needs. Please use the formal engagement routes outlined above to ensure that your views are heard and considered.

After the consultation period closes we will review all the patient and staff feedback and consider whether to develop a formal proposal to the ICB. Our intention is to be open and transparent throughout this process, whilst maintaining safe care and ensuring the viability of the Practice.

Thank you for your time in reading this very long letter. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the public meeting. We hope to be able to alleviate some, if not all, of the concerns you may have.

If you, or someone you know, requires a copy of this letter in a different format please let us know.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Richard Cockshott



Dr Paula-Jane Marrett



Dr Jan Knobloch