

**THE future of the Dilke Hospital at Cinderford is under review. Here LIAM WILLIAMS, West Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust Development Manager, North Forest, explains why the review is being undertaken.**

# Early days yet for hospital options

**O**VER the last year West Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) has been undertaking a review of the services it delivers in the Dilke Memorial Hospital in the Forest of Dean.

This review has included members of the local community attending workshops with us to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of our existing services, as well as potential areas for developing new ones.

Following this work we were requested to concentrate on two key themes and explore the role the PCT could play in increasing access to NHS services and offering more services locally. The process we are about to start is being done so with these themes at the centre.

The main hospital building was opened in 1923 and work has been undertaken since then to develop and expand the range of services it can offer.

However, the hospital site requires in excess of £1 million spent on it in order to keep delivering the existing services and meet legal requirements (eg. Disability Discrimination Act). This is against a background of having the flexibility and capacity to develop new services locally, for example, the development of a Primary Care Diabetes Nurse Specialist and an Orthopaedic Screening Service.

The hospital hosts a minor injury/illness unit, an outpatient department and an inpatient unit as well as other services. In order to ensure that tax payer's money is put to best use, West Gloucestershire PCT is undertaking a site appraisal to plan for future services.

The site appraisal will be undertaken over the next six months and will involve a wide range of people from inside and outside the NHS, as well as local community representatives. It is anticipated that an external contractor will undertake this work on behalf of the PCT to ensure impartiality as well as providing the expertise to understand what is possible using modern building techniques.

There are three options being developed for consideration by the PCT board in early 2005. These are: Minimal investment - this option will outline the minimum that can be invested on the site to maintain the building in line with legal requirements and deliver existing services; Redevelopment - this option will outline the potential for redevelopment on the existing site with an increase in the number of services available; Relocation - West Gloucestershire PCT owns three sites delivering primary care (including services provided by



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Liam Williams, West Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust Development Manager, North Forest.

GPs and practice staff) in Cinderford and this option will explore the possibilities of relocating these services onto one accessible site.

A key consideration in developing all three options will be the heritage of the Dilke Memorial Hospital. West Gloucestershire PCT employs a large number of staff in the Royal Forest of Dean and maintaining the history and heritage of the area is an important consideration for any organisation wishing to sustain the loyalty and commitment of its workforce. We also know that this is very important to the local community who also recognise that our staff are

integral to the quality of services we offer.

In order to ensure that the options are not developed in isolation from the local community, there are a number of initiatives being developed - noticeboards will be displayed in the hospital with up to date information and frequently asked questions answered; an e-mail address will be accessible from the PCT website to enable people to pass on views and ideas or ask questions and I, as the PCT patch manager, will liaise closely with local town, district and county councillors to ensure they are kept informed of work undertaken to date.

We are at the very beginning of this review. No decisions have been taken, no plans have been drawn up and there is no hidden agenda. Once the three options have been developed they will be reviewed by the PCT board and a public consultation will be undertaken. The reason for publicising the work at this stage, before there are any proposals, is to ensure that we are undertaking an open and transparent process that the local community can engage in. We welcome constructive engagement and support and will ensure we publicise opportunities for involvement widely.

**What do YOU think about the possible closure of the Dilke Hospital. Write to Letters, The Citizen, St John's Lane, Gloucester, GL1 2AY, or e-mail letters@gloscitizen.co.uk**