



News Release

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Local people give resounding ‘thumbs up’ to community bid

The results of a recent survey show an 85% approval rating for a community bid to acquire the site of the former cottage hospital in Dartmouth. Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, which is preparing to sell the site, and Dartmouth Town Council are working together to explore whether the community can buy the former Dartmouth Hospital site, and whether its redevelopment could include uses specifically to benefit people in and around Dartmouth.

The survey, which was carried out by independent health and social care champion, Healthwatch on behalf of the council and the NHS, was live from 08 November to 10 December. During that time, 642 people responded either online or by filling out a paper copy of the survey, which was available at local venues in and around Dartmouth.

85% of respondents were keen to see a community bid for the site, to deliver social benefit as well as economic value for the community. The remaining 15% expressed some concerns about whether the council had the required funding or expertise to deliver such a significant development project. People were asked to say what facilities they would like to see on the site and the most popular response was for affordable housing for key workers and local people. Other responses included facilities for community and social groups, health or care services, using the site for commercial

purposes or selling it, harbour offices, police services and parking. The full results of the survey are available on the [Healthwatch Devon](#) and [Healthwatch Torbay](#) websites.

Dartmouth Town Councillor, Ged Yardy, commented: “We are delighted to have such a huge vote of confidence from local people. Those who expressed some concerns are right that it is a huge ask for our community to come together and create an economically viable bid for this site in a matter of just a few months. But we have to try: this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our community.

“We have several development companies who are keen to work with us and we will do everything in our power to deliver facilities that local people want for our town. The next step is to share the results of this survey with potential developers and receive their feedback on what they think we can achieve together. Of course, any future development will need to include some commercial elements to help pay for community facilities. At this stage, we are very hopeful. We are grateful to the support from our NHS partners in collaborating on a development brief that we believe would deliver both economic and social benefits for this community.”

Adrien Cooper, Interim Director of Environment for Torbay and South Devon added: “We would like to thank Healthwatch for carrying out and evaluating this survey. The high response rate shows that local people are keen to have a say in what happens in their town. We are delighted to be working with the Town Council in this way to try to achieve the kind of development that local people actually want for the waterfront. As a public sector organisation, there are some rules we have to follow when we sell any land or buildings, including making sure we get a fair price. But that doesn't mean we have to sell to the highest bidder. We are really keen to see local people benefit from any development, and are doing everything we can to support this community bid.”

The former hospital site is no longer needed for healthcare and will be sold to help fund a new, £4.8m Health and Wellbeing Centre being built at the top of the town. This will replace the current GP facilities and Dartmouth Clinic and include space for community nurses, therapists, social care workers, as well as Dartmouth Caring and a pharmacy.

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The new centre will support a much more joined-up approach to health and wellbeing services for local people in state-of-the-art, purpose-designed facilities.

The Trust needs the funds from the sale by the end of March 2023, to pay its build costs for the new Health and Wellbeing Centre. If a community bid proves not to be possible, the site will be advertised for sale on the open market in the second half of 2022. In that case, the Trust and Town Council would share their development brief with interested parties, but would not be able to influence any future development on the site.

-ENDS-

For more information please contact the Communications Team at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust on 01803 217398 or email communications.tsdf@nhs.net

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About Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

We are an integrated care organisation providing acute and community health services and adult social care across Torbay and South Devon.

We run Torbay Hospital, community hospitals for Torbay and South Devon as well as providing health and social care at home and within health and wellbeing centres.

We employ approximately 6,500 members of staff, have 420,000 outpatient clinic attendances, over 305,000 community care contacts with patients in their homes and communities, carry out around 21,000 procedures in our theatres and see over 73,000 in our A&E department and 40,000 in our minor injury units every year.

We are proud to be part of a healthcare community that works in partnership to provide the best possible health and care for its population. Our partners include other NHS organisations across Devon, GPs, Torbay Council, Devon County Council, Rowcroft Hospice and our voluntary sector partners. We are also a partner in the Devon NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan, which is looking at long-term plans for the NHS in Devon and aims to secure the 'best care' for our communities within the collective funding available to us all.

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