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Sent via Email: philip.kloer@wales.nhs.uk

Date: 18 May 2026
Ref: RER-260519 - 3115

Dear Professor Kloer,

Re: Meddygfa Sarn – Public Board decision

Earlier this year we attended all the engagement events regarding the proposed closure of Meddygfa Sarn in Pontyates. We have now reviewed the feedback from these meetings, and we would like to identify the key issues we heard in relation to the proposal to close Meddygfa Sarn.

We feel that following the January Board meeting, the local community has had an opportunity to attend engagement sessions and to discuss this proposal with Health Board staff. From the conversations we heard at these events, our impression was that there was listening and information exchange. People clearly explained the significant challenges that they would face to get to other GP Surgeries in the area and how they felt about losing this local service. The Health Board explained some of the challenges it faced in providing safe and sustainable General Medical Services in Pontyates.

Nevertheless, people did not feel that they'd had sufficient opportunity to put forward options for the future of their GP Practice. Instead, things were being done 'to them' and decisions made about their surgery with no opportunity for collaborative thinking or co-production. People did not feel that this was appropriate or acceptable.

Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive: **Alyson Thomas**
Cyfarwyddwr Rhanbarthol (Llais Gorllewin Cymru)/ Regional Director (Llais West Wales):
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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Os byddwch yn ysgrifennu atom yn Gymraeg, byddwn yn ateb yn Gymraeg. Ni fydd hyn yn arwain at oedi wrth ymateb i'ch gohebiaeth.

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In terms of the main themes

1. It remains an emotive topic for people affected by this decision. People were disappointed, angry and upset that there was a threat to their local services, particularly as they feel that other public services are also under threat. They felt that the Health Board's concerns about Meddygfa Sarn had not been discussed with the community before January 2026. As a result, they felt that there had been no transparency and open communication. This meant that it was a significant shock to people when it was suggested by the Health Board that the GP managed practice was facing significant challenges, sufficient to threaten its future. This indicates that there has been a failure to continuously engage with people in the Pontyates area.
2. The most dominant issue was about transport and travel problems that would impact on people if they had to move to other surgeries. If people do not drive or have access to a car, then the fastest mode of transport involves taxi services. These are exceedingly limited in rural areas such as Pontyates and can be costly, inconvenient and unreliable if a 2-way journey is needed, as taxi drivers cannot be expected to wait for patients for an unpredictable time period whilst they have a GP appointment.

Existing bus services do not currently provide people with a convenient or appropriate way to get to Pontyberem or to Kidwelly, so people will face significant barriers to accessing care. A return journey from Pontyates to Kidwelly can take around 5 hours, involving 4 separate buses. For an unwell person seeking a same day appointment, this will create significant pressure; their day will begin queuing on a phone and then taking multiple bus journeys to spend approximately 10 minutes with a health care professional. A simple GP appointment may therefore require an entire day off work or many hours away from home.

The distances between Pontyates and Pontyberem/Kidwelly are not reasonable walking distances because each route does not have safe pavements or street lighting.

This proposal therefore does not provide access that works for everyone.

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3. We heard how some people would struggle to travel to other sites not only because of the limitations of public transport and taxi services but because of physical disability, mental ill health, financial barriers etc.
- Bus transport for someone who is not steady on their feet can be a significant source of concern and steps on/off buses can be difficult to negotiate with confidence. For people using walking aids or prams, this can be challenging.
 - For a person requiring a late afternoon appointment in winter, waiting for transport to return home in the dark may create additional stresses if they have to rely on the final bus of the day to get home.
 - With the rising costs of living, people were concerned that they would be required to make a financial outlay just to get to see a doctor. When finances are under pressure, people may be compelled to make personal judgements and short-term decisions about what is affordable. This may have longer term implications for health services if patients present to health services later in their illness.
4. We also heard from people with caring responsibilities. There are many parents and unpaid carers in our communities. They were worried about how they would manage to get care for their loved ones if they had to take several hours to attend a short GP appointment.

They felt that there was a significant difference in the time requirement to go to Meddygfa Sarn in Pontyates compared to going to another village. The mileage might be relatively low, but the transport is very impractical.

Whilst neighbours and friends might be able to provide support for a housebound person for a short timescale, this was not the same as asking someone to step in to provide care for several hours and to provide support for mealtimes or toileting.

Parents were worried that they might not get back in time to collect children from school or that their children might miss more of their schooling simply because of the time it would take to see a GP.

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Considering this, we think that the Health Board must continue to work with the people currently registered at Meddygfa Sarn to identify and fully explore all potential options. Llais is keen to remain involved in discussions on the way forward.

Many thanks

Donna Coleman

Donna Coleman
Regional Director (Llais West Wales)

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