

Over 500 people attended a demonstration in Stroud today to protest against plans to take local hospitals and community health services across Gloucestershire out of the NHS, and into a 'Community Interest Company' which is being badged a 'social enterprise'.

The crowd, with shouts of 'Whose NHS? Our NHS!', 'The NHS is not for Sale' and 'Social Enterprise – No way! We Demand Our Say!' wound through central Stroud, before listening to speeches outside Stroud's Subscription Rooms about how the plans are being fought both through legal action and through community and union action.



Photo courtesy Robin Hayward. More photos to come!

For a video of the march see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7s0vTzuNeA&feature=youtu.be>

For more information and links to press coverage, click 'Read More'

Caroline Molloy of Stroud Against the Cuts said “We’ve told them that they are breaking the law if they just quietly hand our NHS over to an unaccountable social enterprise. Our legal advice is that we've got a very strong case and we're prepared to fight this all the way, if that's what it takes to stop them.”

Demonstrators heard that Stroud Against the Cuts were backing a legal case which has been launched by Stroud resident Michael Lloyd, to stop the transfer of over 3000 NHS health staff out of the NHS, which is due to take place on 1st October. John Marjoram, Stroud’s Mayor, David Drew, Stroud’s former Labour MP and Tanya Palmer of Unison South West all launched impassioned pleas for a public NHS, publicly owned and accountable. Chris Moore of Stroud Against the Cuts pointed to the example of Central Surrey Health, the first big health social enterprise, which has recently lost out on a contract to Assura Medical, a private healthcare company owned by Virgin Healthcare.

Stroud Against the Cuts has launched a fundraising appeal to ask people to contribute to the community portion of the legal costs. Cheques made payable to ‘Keep Gloucestershire’s NHS Public’ can be sent to Bernice Boss, Treasurer, Keep Gloucestershire’s NHS Public, c/o Stroud Against the Cuts, The Exchange, Brick Row, Stroud, GL5 1DF.

Media coverage:

BBC Gloucestershire News Website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-15046892>

Video of BBC Points West TV Coverage: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OohDEeogcBI>

Citizen Website: <http://www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/Hundreds-march-save-NHS/story-13396510-detail/story.html>