Gloucestershire campaigners to march on Parliament as part of national NHS protest

What:

Around 100 people from Gloucestershire will take coaches from Stroud, Gloucester and Cheltenham to the national "It's Our NHS" demonstration organised by Health Campaigns Together and The People's Assembly Against Austerity.

Stroud Against the Cuts will also hold a stall on Kings St – next to their window display in the former Thomsons Travel shop opposite Barclays.

When:

Saturday 4th March. Coaches will leave to arrive in London for the demonstration which starts at 12 noon. The stall in Kings St will operate from 11am – 1pm with a photo-call at 12 to coincide with the start of the demonstration in London.
Campaigners against NHS cuts, closures and privatisation will join thousands of people from around the country in a march on Parliament this Saturday 4th March. Stroud Against the Cuts (SATC), which is affiliated to the national group Keep Our NHS Public, have organised a coach from Stroud to go to the rally. Tickets are available from www.tinyurl.com/stroud-nhs-coach, or via James on 07734 058789 - and coaches from Cheltenham and Gloucester have been organised by Cheltenham & Gloucester Against Cuts. SATC is also organising a protest outside their window display on Kings St (opposite Barclays) for people who cannot go to London, but wish to show their support. A variety of posters, produced by the public at a recent pop up NHS exhibition in Stroud, will be turned into placards and made available to people attending the NHS protest.

James Beecher said “This government is making a political choice to underfund the NHS, to close and privatise services and to reduce our access to healthcare as the system becomes more like the disastrous one in America. The news has been full of terrible stories recently – but these are the direct results of government policies over the past 6 years, not the fault of patients, health workers, or the principles of the NHS. We hope people will join us on the coach to London or at our stall on Kings St at 12noon to show their support for a publicly-funded, publicly-owned NHS providing comprehensive, universal care on the basis of need not ability to pay, and to demonstrate their opposition to this government’s policies.”

The protest comes as local campaigners have been highlighting private company Care UK’s takeover of the management of Out Of Hours care in Gloucestershire, and concerns about the new 5-year Gloucestershire “Sustainability and Transformation Plan”. Opposition to the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) which have been produced for 44 areas in
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England, have been attracting much national press coverage. Stroud Against the Cuts is encouraging councillors in Gloucestershire to follow the example of other councils who have successfully opposed their local STPs. Although the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council is a signatory to the plan, financial and other details have not been made available to the public or even to our elected representatives.

Writing in a letter to the Editor today, Caroline Molloy, Editor of Open Democracy Our NHS, and colleagues in Stroud Against the Cuts said “SATC believes that cuts to services and sell offs are being hidden as the plan demands £226 million of savings and there is a £100 million hole in the capital budget. Our “Hands Off Our NHS” postcard asks all County Councillors to robustly defend Gloucestershire NHS services against further loss of hospital beds and services by opposing the local plan and the government’s underfunding of the NHS and social care. The plans are a fantasy wish list, heavily dependent on the NHS spending large sums on IT, with no guarantees about the future of our hospitals, and with no evidence to back them up. Not having the detail is a significant restraint on the democratic process.”