

Stuart Bell CBE
Chief Executive
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Warneford Hospital
Warneford Lane
Headington
Oxford
OX3 7JX

17 April 2015

Dear Stuart Bell CBE,

We ask you to halt the closure of kitchens at our community hospitals in Wantage, Didcot, Wallingford, Chipping Norton and Witney, and to carry out a thorough public consultation before changing to pre-packed ready meals which are delivered to Oxfordshire from another part of the country.

Popularity of freshly cooked food

Statistics published by the Care Quality Commission, the independent NHS regulator, show that patients prefer food which is freshly cooked from scratch [1]. We ask that you consider this independent data, rather than the unreliable data about the quality of hospital food published by Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE). PLACE data has come under sustained public and media pressure for being inaccurate [2].

The online petition launched by Councillor Alex Meredith in opposition to the kitchen closures has already been signed by 324 people and 100 people have also signed a hard copy version, showing the strength of public feeling about this issue [3].

Long-term cost of pre-packaged ready meals

Trusts may be able to make short-term savings by closing its kitchens, for example by making redundancies to NHS catering staff directly employed by the Trust. However, some hospitals are showing that it might cost more to buy food from private contractors than to have it made in-house, and therefore may lead to higher catering costs in the long term.

Nottingham City Hospital, for example, saved an estimated £6 million a year by going back to freshly preparing and cooking food on-site after a period of contracted-out catering [4].

Freshly cooked food is safer

We are alarmed to hear that the Trust thinks that pre-packaged ready meals are 'safer' when most cases of listeriosis, which is especially dangerous for elderly patients, are commonly found in chilled 'ready-to-eat' food, such as pre-packaged sandwiches [5].

Supporting the local economy

Figures from the Soil Association's *Food for Life Catering Mark* team show that for every £1 spent on seasonal local food, hospitals can invest up to £3 in the local economy, including supporting local businesses and local jobs [6]. By shutting the kitchens at Wantage, Didcot, Wallingford, Chipping Norton and Witney, the Trust is permanently shutting the door to local suppliers which could cost the local economy up to £3 million every year.

We look forward to hearing your response and to presenting the local petition to you when more local people have been given an opportunity to sign it.

Yours sincerely,



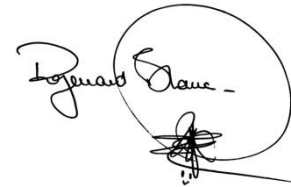
Alex Jackson,
Co-ordinator,
Campaign for
Better Hospital
Food



Andy Jones,
Chair of the Hospital
Caterers Association



Ben Reynolds,
Co-ordinator, Sustain:
the alliance for better
food and farming



Raymond Blanc
OBE, Chef Patron Le
Manoir aux
Quat'Saisons



Jacquie Pearce-
Gervis, Chair of
Patient Voice



Katharine Jenner,
Campaigns Director,
Consensus Action on
Salt and Health, and
Chief Executive of
Blood Pressure UK



Ruth Westcott,
Co-ordinator,
Sustainable Fish
Cities



Mike Rayner,
Professor of
Population Health at
the University of
Oxford

Councillor Alex
Meredith, member
of Faringdon Town
Council

Councillor Jenny
Hannaby, member
for Grove and
Wantage

Dr Aseem Malhotra,
Consultant
Cardiologist

Dr Sally Norton,
Weight-loss surgeon

Ingeborg
Steinbach, The
Centre for
Sustainable
Healthcare

Julian Cottee,
Chair of Good Food
Oxford

Peter Smith,
President / Lead
Ambassador,
Oxfordshire Chamber
of Commerce

Susannah
McWilliam, Soil
Association

Oxford Friends of
the Earth



Patient Voice



sustain
the alliance for better food and farming

References

[1] See Section 3, Hospital Kitchens (page 4) in the Campaign for Better Hospital Food's *Keep Hospitals Cooking* briefing, available at www.sustainweb.org/publications/.

[2] See Section 4. *Data about hospital food published by Trusts conflicts with findings of the Care Quality Commission* (page 4) in the Campaign for Better Hospital Food's *Time to Come Clean about Hospital Food*, available at www.sustainweb.org/publications/.

AND

Try not to choke - but health bosses say we love hospital food, Daily Mail, 3 February 2015, www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2936982/Try-not-choke-health-bosses-say-love-hospital-food.html

[3] See *Halt the Closure of Kitchens at Oxfordshire's Community Hospitals*, <https://www.change.org/p/oxford-health-nhs-foundation-trust-halt-the-closure-of-kitchens-at-oxfordshire-s-community-hospitals>

[4] See section 3.2 *Closing kitchens might cost hospitals more in the long term* (page 5) in the Campaign for Better Hospital Food's *Keep Hospitals Cooking* briefing, available at www.sustainweb.org/publications/.

[5] See 'Listeriosis', NHS Choices, <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Listeriosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

[6] According to a Freedom of Information survey carried out by the Campaign for Better Hospital Food in 2013, Oxford Health NHS Trust spends £1,958,345 a year on food ingredients for patient meals across its nine sites. We estimate that approximately half of this expenditure is for food in patient meals at the five hospitals at threat of kitchen closures. To see a full set of data for the Trust, please see Appendix A of the Campaign for Better Hospital Food's *Keep Hospitals Cooking* briefing, available at www.sustainweb.org/publications/.

In a study of the effect of adopting Food for Life Catering Mark standards the Soil Association calculates that for every £1 spent on seasonal and local ingredients, a further £3 of economic benefits is generated in the local area. For more information, see *Good hospital food needn't cost more*, Soil Association, www.sacert.org/news/newsandfeatures/articleid/6084/good-hospital-food-needn-t-cost-more.

AND

See *Outrage over hospital ready meal proposals*, Oxfordshire Guardian, 26 March 2015, <http://www.oxfordshireguardian.co.uk/outrage-over-hospital-ready-meal-proposals/>