

‘Illogical to have no hospital in county’

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PLANS to change the health care system in west Wales should be more ambitious and strive to create a better future for the region, a retired Pembrokeshire GP has said.

Dr Roger Burns, 68, a founding member of St Thomas Surgery, Haverfordwest, and a former board member of Hywel Dda has said the health authority's transforming clinical services plans need to go further for a long-term sustainable future for the health service in west Wales.

"It is illogical to have a new hospital outside of Pembrokeshire," he said. "If you are going to build a new one it should be where the height of the population is in the summer."

"This is not only from the delivery of health care but also from the recruitment point of view."

Dr Burns believes health care in west Wales could be much more sustainable if Hywel Dda University Health Board and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board were merged into one.

Dr Burns suggested the hospitals in Swansea, Llanelli and Carmarthen should be closed, with a new super-hospital built outside of the city on the M4.

A second super-hospital, he said, should be built along the A40 as it enters Pembro-



Dr Roger Burns would like to see two health boards merge.

keshire.

But he added: "The view of GPs in Pembrokeshire since this whole process started is that you cannot give the people of Pembrokeshire a good service until you have a dual carriageway running through the county."

Under this new health authority, he said, the people of west Wales would have more choice of care within one area.

This would mean patients would not have to seek treatment in a different authority which diverts money away from their own hospitals,

he said, citing patients who currently need to travel to Swansea for cancer treatment.

Dr Burns also shared his thoughts on the need to train more doctors and how to attract them to work in "periphery" areas like Pembrokeshire

"There's not enough doctors for the next 10 to 15 years. We are going to be short of doctors," he said, suggesting the UK could follow the model adopted by Germany of training a surplus of doctors, meaning positions in even the most iso-

lated regions of the country are filled.

But the retired GP said the political momentum needed for a change like this does not exist because of the short termism of British politics.

Hywel Dda's transforming clinical services plan is due to see Withybush Hospital downgraded from a general hospital to a community hospital, alongside Glangwili and Prince Philip hospitals.

To replace the A&E lost with this change, a new hospital is planned between Narberth and St Clears.