

## **Lowestoft Branch of Suffolk Pensioners Association NPC - Future dates for the Diary:**

Saturday 3rd February – Dignity Day – NPC stall at Norwich – 11.00 am – 1.00 pm - Use bus pass on X1/X2  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February: Lowestoft Branch Meeting – 1.45 pm BTSocial Club hall, Clapham Road South.  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March: Sheringham Group Meeting - Minibus trip Dep Stella Maris 9.00 am \*£7 contribution  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March: Lowestoft Branch Meeting – 1.45 pm BT Social Club Hall.  
Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March: Anglia Region AGM – Hethersett – Minibus trip dep. Stella Maris 9.00 am \*£7 cont.:  
Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April: Lowestoft Branch Meeting - 1.45 pm BT Social Club Hall.  
Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May: Lowestoft Branch Meeting - 1.45 pm BT Social Club Hall.  
Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June: Minibus Trip to Blackpool Parliament, returning Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June.  
Thursday 21st June – Anglia Region General meeting and Buffet Lunch 10 for 10.30 am – Speaker on wills.

## **Old Grey Matter article submitted to the EADT for publication Saturday 6<sup>h</sup> January 2018**

*(Crisis – What Crisis? - submitted)* **We need to act on this NHS crisis now**

I'd like to wish all a happy and healthy New Year, particularly all of us needing the NHS whose 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary falls in July - but don't hold your breath! There are no new government resolutions to adequately cope with the expected demand from a growing aged population. Those of us fortunate to enter the system testify to getting good attention and service and time for the healing process to be assisted by dedicated staff. This is all well and good but without extra resources it's not likely to be the case for all who need it in good time and is at the expense of an over-worked, stressed and under-paid nursing staff. Newspaper headlines and front-page stories this week have commonly featured the crisis state of the NHS, where hospitals are overflowing with patients on trolleys in corridors and many being turned away because senior doctors say they should be treated at home, at their GP's or at Pharmacies. Many thousands of routine operations are advised by health chiefs to be cancelled to make room for emergencies. The planned-for winter spike is here, but a growing number of elderly are down with the flu which complicates other underlying health conditions. Eastern and North-eastern ambulance services are asking for patients to be delivered by relations or by taxi, whilst simultaneously being asked to wait themselves at A&E for many hours before being able to deliver their patients inside for assessment. Hospitals like the James Paget are appealing for qualified staff to come in and help the shortage.

All this confirms what [www.healthcampaignstogether.com](http://www.healthcampaignstogether.com) reports in its quartely newspaper. Black alerts are now commonplace in Autumn as well and mean that waiting list patients are put on hold, and patients reviewed for potential cancellations. The overall waiting list exceeded over 4 million last September and is growing inexorably due to this winter's crisis. More than one in ten patients have been on the waiting list for more than 18 weeks – and ministers have been repeatedly warned that on present trends that is set to more than double by 2020.

One senior doctor has apologised for third world conditions in his hospital and voices what many privately feel – that the country should invest more in health and a supporting care service. He is not alone - two thirds of hospital consultants and specialists have told their union that they fear STPs will downgrade or close hospital units as beds have already been lost in some hospitals. Is this what the country needs?

Realistically, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine say 5000 extra acute beds are needed to bring down to the generally accepted target of 85% occupancy and 2,200 more A&E Consultants are needed to deal with the constantly increasing caseload. GPs also face a funding shortfall of £3.4 billion by 2021 if current plans are unchanged. The Kings Fund reports number of NHS beds have more than halved in the last 30 years making it undesirable now to pursue further closures! Latest NHS England figures show we have 2.3 beds per 1000 – less than two thirds the EU average of 3.7 – can we not learn from Europe before it's too late?

Christopher J. Brooks, Chair,  
Suffolk, and Anglia Region,

Pensioner Associations (NPC)