



**A RED NETWORK ARTICLE
DOWNLOADED FROM
WWW.REDNETWORK.IE**

Save St. Brigid's – A community fights back.

Anne Wall writes about the ongoing community struggle in Co. Tipperary to save a local hospital.

St. Brigid's Hospital, Carrick-on-Suir was built in 1837. It has served the community in Carrick-on-Suir and its environs since then and until April 2020, when it was closed, temporarily, to be used as a Covid-19 step down facility.

St. Brigid's was originally a Cottage Hospital, with many services offered, such as maternity, emergency, and general hospital care. In recent years it has been used as a convalescence, respite, and palliative care centre. There are 3 hospice beds in the hospital, 1 of which was provided by the HSE, the other 2 were provided by the local community through fundraising and donations.

The number of people who have benefited from the facilities and caring staff numbers in the thousands, with people from South Tipperary, South Kilkenny and East Waterford availing of the various services provided.

The announcement of the temporary closure came as a bit of a shock to staff and locals, but it soon became clear that there was another agenda at play and there was a possibility that St. Brigid's would not re-open as promised.

A group of local activists came together and started organizing small protests, following health guidelines, in June 2020. What began as locals silently protesting outside the hospital, grew into marches by the locals through the town of Carrick-On-Suir.

At the end of July Local Fianna Fáil TD, Jackie Cahill, was forced to give an assurance to the campaigners and towns people that Minister Mary Butler had promised the hospital would be re-opening. Protesting was suspended for a few weeks with the hope that a report on a staged re-opening would be ready by then.

However, as the weeks passed and there was no report provided. The protesting restarted, with a hospital bed being pushed from Clonmel to Carrick-on-Suir. Campaigners continued the weekly Saturday protests through the town, braving the elements in their efforts to have the hospital re-opened.

In December 2020, it was announced that St. Brigid's was not going to re-open as it was "not fit for purpose". What had happened between April, when it was fit to be used as a Covid-19 step down facility and December? The hospital was to be used as a diabetic screening centre - despite there being a Primary Care Centre on the hospital grounds.

The local community refused to give up, and continued to protest, giving interviews on local radio, sending press releases to the local media. Minister Butler has been asked to meet with the campaigners but has continually refused to do so. At Christmas, 2 wreaths were laid outside the hospital door, 1 for ex-patients and 1 for staff members.

In the new year, a postcard campaign was launched, members of the community were urged to send them to the Minister to highlight the support for the re-opening of the hospital. As new lockdown restrictions were in place, protest marches could not take place, so a “Convoy of Care” began, whereby motorists would meet at the hospital carpark and drive through the town.

People were encouraged to make St. Brigid’s crosses and leave them at the hospital on the 1st February, and on 14th February, many people left valentine messages. At this stage, the removal of all equipment from the hospital began, the hospital was stripped of everything.

But the people power campaigning continues. Since the middle of April, the “Convoy of Care” leaves the hospital car park at 2pm every Saturday and travels to Portlaoise, the hometown of Minister Butler.

It is hard to tell if this campaign will be successful but one thing is definitely clear and that is that you cannot trust the promises of establishment politicians and that the community of Carrick-on-Suir will not give up our services without a fight.

#savestbrigids.

The RED Network (incorporating Rebel Telly) are a network of radical socialists within the political party People Before Profit, a 32-county people power movement on the island of Ireland.

www.rednetwork.ie