

Big Support For Efford Bill

Clive Efford's "Save the NHS" Bill sailed through its Second Reading on Friday November 21, winning the vote in the House of Commons by 241 to 18. Stockport NHS Watch's petition urging our four MPs to back the Bill finished with a fantastic 2,800 signatories on paper and online.

The big demands of the Bill are

- ∞ **Scrapping the law compelling NHS commissioners to put services out to competitive tender;**
- ∞ **Restoring the Government's duty to provide national health services;**
- ∞ **Stopping the NHS becoming part of the US-EU trade deal now being negotiated.**

Most of the MPs voting for the Bill were Labour. But, according to the BBC, two Conservatives and seven Lib Dems also voted in favour, as well as the Green and UKIP MPs. Most Conservatives stayed away in an attempt to undermine the vote.

Now we come to the disappointing bit. Out of Stockport's four MPs, only Andrew Gwynne voted for it. The other three chose to ignore their constituents' wishes, expressed in our petition, and failed to attend on the day.

We don't know whether Clive Efford's Bill will make any further progress, because of the Government's control of Parliamentary business. Whatever happens to the Bill itself, it has already done a lot to spread the anti-privatisation message inside and outside Parliament.

When we took the petition out on to the streets, we found great concern about what is happening to the NHS. People of all ages said they wanted the NHS to remain "our NHS" – as it has been for sixty years. They do not want privatisation.

The Stockport Express published a good report and photograph of the presentation of a copy of our petition to Denton and Reddish's MP Andrew Gwynne at his office in Denton Town Hall on November 14. At around the same time a second delegation from Stockport NHS Watch was meeting Hazel Grove's Lib Dem MP Sir Andrew Stunell and debating with him his refusal of support.

Petitions were also delivered to Cheadle's MP, Mark Hunter, and Stockport constituency MP, Ann Coffey. Sadly Ms Coffey was particularly discouraging despite Clive Efford being a fellow Labour MP.

Stockport NHS Watch will be doing all we can to get people and politicians focused on saving the NHS, up to and through the election next May.