

# **BACKGROUND TO THE PETITION**

You could be forgiven for thinking that if you needed an ambulance urgently, that one would immediately come rushing from Potter Heigham Ambulance Station. Or alternatively, that there's an experienced Paramedic, who works out of the Hemsby Doctor's Surgery. And that they would easily be with you in the promised 8 minutes response time. BUT YOU WOULD BE WRONG...

That may have been the situation some 12 months or so ago, but not anymore. The bitter truth is that you could find yourself desperately trying to help a loved one all by yourself for quite a while....

You might also think that all ambulances have at least one experienced Paramedic on board. Or that the 8 minutes response time means until the arrival of that Paramedic or an ambulance. Or you might think that all ambulance and emergency staff receive extensive training before they are sent out.

You see, the East of England Ambulance Service Trust has been subject to cuts, like everything else. There simply are not enough resources to ensure that everybody has an adequate level of cover. They realise that to meet their targets, those resources need to be used to the greatest effect and that means concentrating them ON THE TOWNS, where most people live, BUT NOT HERE...

The fact is that there are no On Standby emergency vehicles anymore at Potter Heigham Ambulance Station. That facility is just an overnight garage for out of service vehicles and there are no longer any staff there waiting to jump into a vehicle to respond to your call. Our Local Paramedic not only lived locally, but also had immediate access to his emergency vehicle 24 x 7.

The computer system that controls the positioning of emergency vehicles, places them where they are most likely to be needed. That is where there are the most people and that is just where they end up soon after they go into service. It is true that an ambulance car starts its day at Potter Heigham where it is garaged overnight, but it immediately moves to Caister Police Station to start duties. It then moves on to wherever it is needed, typically Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Gorleston and sometimes Southwold or Ipswich. This can NOT be referred to as a 'locally assigned emergency vehicle'.

If you live anywhere between North of Caister up to Stalham, or anywhere east of Potter Heigham and toward the coast, then this affects you. How long does it take you to drive between great Yarmouth and Hickling for example? Can you do that journey in under 8 minutes? And then, on a busy and drizzly day, with a sugar beet lorry or tractor up ahead, even if you had blue lights, sirens and right of way?

There's another side to this too. In the past when there was a locally based Paramedic, they did not just sit there and read the paper waiting for emergency calls. Quite the reverse, they responded to those 999 calls keeping A&E clear by giving minor treatments on the spot and thus saving the NHS money. That pioneering program of Admission Prevention is just what the government is now calling for.

Being close to the Norfolk Broads, nature reserves, holiday villages and having a much higher than average number of care homes affects our area too. The elderly often have chronic healthcare needs and are much more likely to need emergency care. The holiday population too can present a massive strain on our local resources as some village populations increase by a factor of 5 in summer!

Be in no doubt whatsoever, that we need our locally stationed emergency vehicle & Paramedic back!

Noel Galer

Hemsby Parish Councillor